Through the Looking Glass of the Language Ego:

The Search of the English-speaking Self in Adult Language

Learners

By

Tatiana Galetcaia

A Thesis Submitted to the
Faculty of Graduate Studies
In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of

Master of Education

Department of Curriculum, Teaching and Learning

Faculty of Education

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ABSTRACT

Dynamics of the second language learner's identity interests researchers in the field of applied linguistics who explore the ways in which self-identification is constituted by language. Application of psychoanalytic theories in Second Language Acquisition (SLA) is assumed to provide an additional perspective on how the processes of identity formation relate to the varied contexts of language learning. The learner of the second language has to shape her relation to the L2 interactive contexts constantly comparing them with those of L1 and primary culture on one hand, and negotiating the concepts attached to the target language and culture on the other. The sense of the perceived self that accounts for how the learner feels connected to the target linguistic and cultural environment may be the key component of such processes. The formation of *ego,* a concept borrowed from psychoanalytic theory, as the component of both conscious and unconscious experience of the self, is believed to be formed through the symbolic realms of language. Since the bulk of psychoanalytic and language theories link ego formation to the first language development, it seems worth exploring the role of ego development in second language acquisition. The purpose of this phenomenological study is to describe the lived experiences of second language learners related to self-identification situated in cross-symbolical relationship between L1 and L2.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Acknowledgements

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Language is the house of being.

----Martin Heidegger

Chapter I

Introduction and context

Preface

In a banal but important way, our names reflect who we

are, how we know ourselves, and how we are known.

------Miller (2003, p.72)

I do what they want me to, but it is not "me" ----"me" is

else where, "me" belongs to no one, "me" does not

belong to me,… does "me" exist?

-------Kristeva (1991, p. 6)

I would start this with a personal story and observation. When my family first came

to Canada, we were assisted by a person whose name was Barry Jacobs (to keep this

person's confidentiality I changed the name keeping the form). Barry was one of those

very helpful people who had extended to me a profound support both in words and

deeds. When I saw him for the first time I noticed that he did not seem that "foreign "to

me since his looks reminded me of my fellow countrymen from Europe. Later, in

describing his roots Barry mentioned that his original family name was Polish and

actually sounded as Jacobowski. He continued to say that it was his father or his

grandfather who upon coming to Canada had decided to change the family name to a

more English-like form. I did not pay much attention to that then; however, upon

reflection I realized that there was something unusual about that, particularly the reason

why a person would choose to anglicize his Polish name. After all isn't it the last name that embodies kinship roots that families strive to preserve and pass on? Symbolically last name connects many generations and keeps the family history alive. Through a given name we exhibit our outward persona presenting it to the world; through a family name we show connection to some kinship, culture, and land. In many cultures there is belief that when you change your name you change your life and fate. It is as if you wished to cross out all that was connected with that name before in order to start anew. New name - new life. No more past.

I wondered about the reasons why someone like Barry would have had his last name changed. Was his father afraid of having his name be mispronounced all the time? Or perhaps was he ruthlessly persecuted for something? Or was the hostility towards immigrants so commonplace that it was safer to "blend in"? The answer perhaps lay in a combination of the above. I did not ask Barry about his name, leaving him the right to explain if he chose to. Yet, he did not wish to, and I did not insist. As I investigated further and met more people from different generations of Polish and Ukrainian immigrants (especially those from the first waves), I found out that this had been a mass phenomenon: to change the Slavic names to more English- sounding ones, keeping only the root of the original at best. Whatever the reasons, people wanted to begin their life in the new country by changing their names. They say those who did change their names were more successful at finding jobs and securing promotions. They say employers were more willing to hire people with the English-like names even if they heard the strong accents. It sounded a little unbelievable that between the two immigrants from the same country, speaking the same poor English, having arrived in one group on the same transcontinental boat, the employer would frequently choose the individual, who had changed his Slavic name into an English one. Trying to analyze that phenomenon, I believe employers may have felt more certainty about those people who

changed their names as if by that the newcomers were showing readiness to assimilate into the setting and adopt the rules of the working place in a new country. The resultant discriminatory policy of the host employers forced newcomers to change their names to please the dominant population; indeed, the immigrants' survival may have depended on this. At the same time, I endeavored to look at this phenomenon from another perspective. Did the changing of surnames signal a crisis of confidence or quite to the opposite, a confirmation that the immigrants carried the inner strength to be open to change? I contemplated how people who came to a new homeland were seeking ways to adapt to the demands of the day. What else could more precisely "identify your identity" than your name and how else could you connect more quickly to a new setting than by adopting a linguistically familiar name? Andjey Lipowetsky becomes *Andrew Lips* or Petro Dubrova--- *Peter Dubbers*; Aleksey Shatrov*?* No, --- *Alex Shatter*[3]. If you get a new name you will be more likely to get a job. You play by the rules of the majority --- and you will have less chances of being rejected by it. By transforming your Slavic name into a version based on the language dominantly spoken, shared by those on whom you might depend for survival, you set up a more promising start. It may be true then that when people change their "home," they might also be ready to change their identity as evidenced through the changing of their name. This underpins an assumption that it is the preparedness to adopt changes and develop a matching identity that increases chances for success. Assessment of the target culture on one hand and attempts to find one's place in it on the other can serve as strong stimuli for self-adjustment. This can be a very complicated and varied process among the affected individuals provoking a wide array of responses. Standing between the past and the future, the newcomer, the "foreigner", has to reconsider her planes of existence. What happened before now---hardly exists, and what will be in future depends on how she

can connect to the new setting in the present. To do so she needs to step over some psychological barriers, or boundaries as Hartmann (1991) points out ---"boundaries between ourselves and others, … between "us" and "them"" (p.3). Similar to how physical boundaries form barriers between self and the outside world (Hartmann, 1991) the boundaries of the mind can form barriers between our original cultural and linguistic backgrounds and those of the new country. As these boundaries are real only in our minds, the process of resolving the inner conflict largely depends on a personal ability to settle within the self, perhaps simultaneously applying different selves: those referring to the past and those referring to the present. Is it the case then that the arrival has to apply "multiplying masks and "false selves … never completely true nor completely false" (Kristeva, 1991, p.6)? Undoubtedly, the foreigner faces the challenge to search for *the self* in a new dimension. Does it mean that the she actually must "focus on [her] possibilities of being constantly other, according to others' wishes and circumstances" as Kristeva (1991) suggests? To what extent can people remain *themselves* in the context that is linguistically, culturally or academically new? What motivates newcomers, who for the most part are language learners, to adapt to the new context or, to deny a constructive reorientation of original cultural values that such adoption unavoidably involves? How do English Language Learners (ELLs) or other people who must function in the environment other than their own develop the sense of belonging? Do they actually develop it? How much of Barry Jacobowski is left in Barry Jacobs? Is it the same person or a new one? One person or two? All of these stimulate an interest to explore a multi-dimensional interaction of a learner's individuality within the second language; specifically, to discover how acquisition of the second language may influence the potential development of the identity that may eventually match it. To summarize, the interdependence of the language and thought, the environment and the

learner's perception of herself in that environment, frames the research agenda of the proposed inquiry.

Statement of topic

> *At every moment you choose yourself. But do you*
>
> *choose your self? Body and soul contain a thousand*
>
> *possibilities out of which you can build many I's.*
>
> --- Hammerskjold in Menacker (1984)

> *The language, my tongue… is like another person.*
>
> ----Richard in Kouritzin (1999), p.123

The proposed research has grown over many years of teaching EFL/ESL in Eastern Europe and Canada. Communication with students, ESL instructors and multilingual people brought me to an understanding that second language acquisition is driven not only by cognitive and affective needs (Coelho, 2004) or instrumental and integrative motivation (Gardner & Lambert, 1972), but also by the intersection of linguistic, psychological, socio-cultural (Gumperz, 1982) and intercultural (Bennett, 1998, Hinkel, 1999) experiences that constitute the second language learner's identity (Ellis, 1991; Griffiths, 1991; Kramsch, 1993; MacPherson, 2004; Norton, 2000; Spolsky, 1998). It resonates well with Kouritzin (1999) when she employed a framework that "viewed language as a constantly metamorphosing intersection between linguistic elements, identity, culture, history, reality, information and communication" (p.19). I also share Guiora's (1982) view of the language as "a unique phenomenon in the sense that it is both intensely personal … and at the same time species-specific" (1982, p.171). Despite being seen mostly as a universal tool for communication, language incorporates

a mixture of interrelated parameters, both intra- and interpersonal, "allowing a view of the total person in a manifestation that lends itself to a scientific inquiry" (Guiora, 1982, p.171). In other words, language studies encompass so many different domains of human representation that looking at each of them can lead to a large body of research. Frequently these parameters overlap to a great extent and it can be hard to draw distinct borderlines between them. To illustrate, such a parameter as ethnic representation put in the center of the ethnographic research will inevitably deal with certain linguistic attributions to understand ethnicity. An obvious intimate interdependence between language and a sense of belonging to a particular ethnos creates a basis for the formation of the linguistic identity where language serves as the tool to express that particular ethnicity. This intimacy is so close that normally it is very hard for a person to separate herself from the language she uses for both cognition and communication since " … my language will always be there waiting for me, because my language is me" (Richard, cited in Kouritzin, 1999, p. 71). No wonder, as a practitioner, I am constantly searching for teaching strategies relevant to students' individual differences rooted in their culture and inner personal traits in order to increase students' motivation and effectiveness of the educational intervention. It is my intention to explore the dynamics of multiple parameters influencing negotiation of the learner's identity in SLA. For me it appears particularly intriguing to consider 1) how the first language (L1) affects the way ELLs perceive the second language (L2); 2) how L1 provokes an emergence of confrontation with L2 (Brown, 2000; Guiora, 1980) which can potentially lead to the development of an alternative identity in ELLs corresponding to the conceptual and practical paradigm of L2. Most often educators do not even question the influence of such inner, almost imperceptible processes within ELLs, however these are critically important for creating conditions for the adequate second language instruction. When a learner engages with multi-layered aspects of the new language, she soon

faces the imperative to reshape her identity based on encountering the unknown. These identity dynamics transpire in the learner's struggle to function appropriately within a complex of multi-dimensional language tasks. The influence of another identity can become apparent in different ways: non-verbally at the time of direct discourse, as Kupelikilinc (2003) describes," If one changes languages, not only the words, but also gestures and facial expressions, intonation and posture, change" (p. 199) or involving more complex psychological reactions bilinguals, for instance, report that their behavior and other personal responses may change with the language they use (Edwards,1995; Kupelikilinc, 2003)as linguistic formulation of experience, which includes sensory perception as well as intellectual processing (Vygotsky, 1962) is closely attached to the socio-cultural language realities (Paige, 1986;Valdes, 1986). This insight led to speculation concerning the role of "*Language ego"* (Guiora ,1972a; Ehrman ,1996) or a personal filter that unavoidably influences learners' capacities to absorb and adapt to the new linguistic reality. As Brown (2000) elaborates, "Meaningful language acquisition involves some degree of identity conflict as language learners take on a new identity with their newly acquired competence. An adaptive *language ego* enables learners to lower the inhibitions that may impede success" (p.147). To remove the barriers created by personal restraints in learners could be very problematic. Assisting learners in adaptation to the new linguistic and cultural context requires sensitivity and understanding of the internal factors influencing the acclimatization.

Topic significance

The increasing inflow of diverse groups coming to Canada, mostly immigrants and international students, demands that program coordinators, educators, scholars, and government officials consider how to effectively address these cohorts' needs in a new

setting. As these arrivals are initially engaged in second language learning in order to more quickly integrate into the Canadian social, cultural and/or academic environment, it would be reasonable to investigate issues related to the identity dimensions in English Language Learners (ELLs) experiencing such challenge. Language learning makes the first step in that process when the learner has to redefine her relation to the new social and cultural setting, explore it, and presumably adjust to the target culture patterns and/or academic requirements. Most frequently, the actual success of the integration into the new cultural setting depends on how effectively learner is ready to accept and adopt the target patterns. This involves much investment (Norton, 2005) on the part of learners and highly professional adequate assistance on the part of educators. To better facilitate the demanding journey EAL students have to face, it would be reasonable to investigate learner's identity dynamics in the context of intercultural communication (Bennett, 1993; Paige, 1993) or the negotiation of identities in multilingual contexts (Blackledge & Pavlenko, 2001).

Research purpose: Issues and assumptions

The learner's encounter with the unknown can take a highly dramatic turn. Valdes (1986) emphasizes that in conditions of adjusting to the new culture the study of another language stresses a person "with two unknowns simultaneously" (p.vii). This can lead to a wide range of personal reactions: among them discomfort, confusion, and frustration are not the worst ones. To consider how contact with the new linguistic and cultural environment accounts for identity dynamics it is critical to explore patterns of complex individual responses to unfamiliar environment. As MacPherson (2005) summarizes, the learner's struggle to adapt may involve various patterns of behavior including *resistance, assimilation, marginality, semilinguism, bicultural accommodation and*

intercultural creativity (Bennet, 1986; 1993; Berry, 1980; Birman, 1994; Romaine, 1994; 2000, cited in MacPherson). These patterns transpire as a result of the relationship between learners' social worlds (Hawkins, 2005) and the outer world. The socially situated identities have to fuse their sociocultural experiences into interaction where the flow of language, participation and negotiation (Hawkins, 2005) is shaped under the influence of their experiences and those of the interlocutors (Bernstein, 1990; Edwards & Potter, 1992; Fairclough, 1992, cited in Hawkins, 2005; Norton, 2005). As language is viewed mainly as 1) a means of expression in socially situated interactions, 2) an agent of individual representation; 3) the primary constituent of culture and ethnicity (Fishman, 1999; Joseph, 2004); 4) an a indicator of a symbolic value (Bourdieu, 1977), it retains the key role in the process of identity development. It would not be an exaggeration to say that the language the person speaks and linguistic choices she makes reveal the vast range of her sociocultural memberships along with the individual qualities. To the same extent as language reflects and constructs identity, identity constructs and reflects language. Coalescing individual psychology with socially acquired traits, a learner has to negotiate her identity in reference to the new situation created by the target language and culture. Given that there is a relationship between psycholinguistic characteristics of the learner's individuality rooted in the prime influence of her sociocultural background and the ways in which she acquires new information and adapts to the new environment, it is reasonable to propose gaining a deeper insight into the nature of that phenomenon. Put simply, the facts of who you are and where you come from in the broader sociocultural sense, influence the way you actually learn and use a new language.

Recognizing the primary importance of the psychological constituent of identity as the "complex ongoing mental process influenced by one's experiences" (Watkins-

Goffman, 2001, p. 1) or "how a person understands his or her relationship to the world,

how that relationship is constructed across time and space" (Norton, 2005, p.5), this

study will attempt to understand the *language ego* concept, explore its function in the

context of ESL teaching and learning and consider how to introduce this idea in

classroom practice, for "teachers need to recognize that as the students struggle to

learn the language and adapt to a new culture, they are also searching for an identity in

a new cultural context and often in a very short amount of time." (Watkins-Goffman,

2004, p.1). Accordingly, the purpose of this research is to investigate and perceive the

role of *language ego* in second language acquisition, and how it relates to recent

research in identity and second language teaching and learning (Norton, 2005). While

Norton's research has focused predominantly on social relationships which influence

second language learners' identity, as "language is the place where actual and possible

forms of social organization ... [and] our sense of us, our subjectivity, constructed"

(Norton, 2004, p. 4), the current research will highlight the psychological reactions,

responses and identity dynamics in the process of additional/ second language

acquisition, assuming that "subjectivity is multiple and conflicted; ... it is subject to

change. This is a crucial point for educators as it opens up *possibilities for educational

intervention* [italics added] (Norton, 2005, p.1)

    Consequently, among the main assumptions and theoretical foundations the

research is based on I would mention the following:

1) Language learning involves individual responses to the process of language
   acquisition that is reflected in the learner's search of the self to accommodate
   to the environment change;

2) The patterns of the transformative processes may vary in learners, however it
   can be assumed that learners pass through similar stages of *intercultural*

3) *adjustment* (Grove & Torbjorn, cited in Paige,1986) trying "to fit" into the new linguistic context.

4) Among the stages of linguistic (as well as cultural and social) adjustment an identity conflict can take place when the learner projects herself further into the new language.

5) It may be necessary to refer to *cultural identity* as the critical context of language learning, as "culture is the context within which we exist, think, feel and relate to others, and language is both a means for communication among members of a culture and an expression of that culture" (Kim, 2004, p.180).

6) The major cause for the potential inner conflict the EAL learners may experience is the fact that they may feel disappointment and alienation not only from the target culture but even from their native one. It can be assumed that it is an alienation from both cultures that causes an *identity conflict.* It can invoke a rather painful and chaotic period of some intermediate stage (like an interlanguage stage in SLA) in learner's negotiation of identity.

7) Adaptive processes may lead to certain forms of identity development while the learner is struggling to identify herself in the new linguistic and social environment;

8) A core agency that participates in the preserving and reproducing certain behavioral patterns in individual, *the nature of self* is associated with the term *ego* (Freud, 1962; Lacan, 1977). Across psychoanalytic theories it is viewed as the one formed through the entry into "the symbolic" of the first language (Lacan, 1977; Kristeva, 1982). It can be reasonable to draw an analogy between this psychoanalytic view and the second language acquisition theories looking for an evidence of how penetration into "the symbolic" of the second language adds dimensions to the ego of the ESL learner either limiting

or expanding its virtual boundaries.

Therefore, the two key concepts of the proposed study are *language* and *ego.* The task is apparently to determine how *ego*, a concept derived from the psychoanalytic theory of identity (Erikson, 1972; Freud, 1962; Jung, 1970; Lacan, 1968; Kristeva, 1982) correlates with the *theories of language* and *learner's identity* in SLA.

Why this topic: Rationale for research inquiry

My own interest in language learning and multilingualism began many years ago; perhaps even at the time when as a seven-year old elementary school student I heard my first word in English. It was *a flower*. What a treat! I was immediately fascinated by the possibility of calling the same things in a different way. It was a game of renaming things to me. It has always been a refined treat– to learn words in other languages and use them as multiple means of self-expression. It looked like expanding your "self" beyond usual limits. Moreover, it was viewing yourself from another angle as if trying on a role you might accept in a different cultural or social setting to better match it. Different languages I was taught to speak gave me that wonderful experience of the first understanding that *my-self* could be actually "multiple". It was at the time of my first negotiation of multiple identities that I became endowed by the knowledge of various linguistic choices I had to make in different social interactions. It has always been an exciting journey! Similar to what MacPherson (2005) described, it was "The expanded possibilities for diversity in life and in the world! … as I negotiated the French language and culture, I came to know different aspects of myself, not just of the country, and with it came a sense of emancipation" (p.3). It was these emotions of positive self-expansion, curiosity and a possibility of living in various realities that formed my passion towards psycholinguistic aspects of multilingualism. Further on in my journey, this

interest was sustained by attraction to the culture of the English-speaking countries, particularly England as it was ever presented as a paragon of tradition, stability and taste. Awareness that one day you could find yourself visiting that country or any other whose languages you could speak, posed a prospect of interaction with people from the differently arranged reality. I have ever been attracted to analyzing how people with dissimilar cultural, social, ideological backgrounds can negotiate meaning and, most interestingly share it. To do so they had to use not only different linguistic means but "collide" their worlds. Obviously, they have to be tolerant to differences and be open to revisiting of the concepts of "us" and "them". When I started teaching ESL I was observing how my students shaped their identities in the context of another language. In the times of *cold war* and *iron curtain* when Soviet Union citizens did not have the right to leave their country even for a visit, everything foreign had a flavor of superiority, freedom and progress. Language learning stimulated open-mindness and interest in other cultures. The more material related to the history and social events of the English-speaking countries we taught, the more curious and responsive to the diversities of the self-expression our students became. It was fascinating to watch them trying to sound more English, more foreign.

This has led me gradually to the topic of the present inquiry: language has a specific quality of featuring our communicative choices based on the essence of culture it embodies. In other words, the patterns of reference and patterns of expression (Hinkel, 1999) are framed by culture. Funny as it may seem, we speak English and we tend to be more "English" at this time, we speak Italian and we start gesticulating more, we speak Japanese and we feel like slowing down a little and reducing the volume of our voices. .Not accidentally, Guiora (1972) and Cope (1980, cited in Valdes) describe the process of developing a second language identity as that of adding on another personality.

Another aspect of multilingualism and intercultural communication has emerged on my arrival in Canada: I noticed how differently people might react to the necessity of using English and adapting to the new environment. I observed that between instrumental and integrative motivation (Gardner & Lambert, 1997), *integrative orientation* (Schumann, 1978, cited in Valdes) acted as the higher catalyst to pave the road to success. It can be defined as "the desire to identify with or closely associate with members of the target culture, [which] promotes acquisition of a second language" (Valdes, 1986, p.24). Therefore, I was interested in the processes of adaptation and most importantly the application of these stages' awareness to help those who are unfortunately "lost in translation": frustrated, unmotivated and detached from the environmental context. I felt very empathetic both as educator and newcomer towards students who found it hard to find connections to the target culture. This emotion evoked seeking ways to assist and support learners in their hard journey. I knew it could be less painful and quite exciting. Now thinking over the research paradigm to adopt, I was trying to connect my longing to explore identity issues to the insights found in SLA and related disciplines.

Chapter II

Literature Review

The proposed research will draw on theories of language and mind based on cognitive, cultural, social and discursive psychology and philosophy as well as theories of Second Language Acquisition. It is necessary to review assumptions on related concepts (See Appendix 1) as well as methodological approaches to explore them, specifically:1) concepts of *ego* and *symbolic* in psychoanalytical theory of identity; the role of symbolic interpretation of objects expressed through language in ego formation (Burke, 1989; Erikson, 1972; Freud , 1962; Klein, 1948; Kristeva, 1991, Lacan ,1968, 1977);2) approaches to identity development in SLA theory and practice perspectives (Cook, 2002; Ehrman, 1990, 1993; Ellis, 1991; Griffiths, 1991; Norton, 2000, 2005) and in post -structural philosophy (Bhabha, 1999; Foucault, 1972; Heidegger, 1971);3) role of affect and emotions in SLA and intercultural communication (Arnold, 2002; MacPherson, 2005; Paige, 1986; Pavlenko, 2005); 4) phenomenology as the conceptual framework of reflective study of the essence of consciousness as experienced from the first point of view (Gadamer,1975; Heidegger, 1971; Smith, 2007) seen as the most applicable in the proposed study. Specifically, the research will draw on theories of language and mind based on cognitive, cultural, social and discursive psychology (Edwards, 1997; Russell, 1991), For the purpose of the proposed research, the following literature review will address: 1) definitions of the operational terms and assumptions on related concepts, 2) a critical summary of the research findings on the identity issues and implications for the present research, and 3) methodological approaches used in the body of research in terms of their applicability to the present study.

The views on personality, identity and ego across related disciplines.

Individual differences in perceiving the world are commonly reflected in ways of reacting to involvement in various human activities, including language learning. As Dornyei (2005) concludes, the most individual characteristic of a human being is personality. When educators attempt to consider the individual differences in learners it is clear that they have to address the personal responses of learners to language instruction. There is no much evidence though of educational attempts to consider the learners' interaction with the language as an essentialized component of the target culture or language as its *symbolic* dimension. Exploration of that complicated interaction based on individuality of the learner and the "symbolic" of the target language is hardly possible without conceptual clarification of personality, identity, and ego, i.e. the main concepts of personality psychology rooted in classic psychoanalytic theory of the beginning of the 20th century.

Personality and identity: One concept –or two?

First, it seems reasonable to clarify how personality and identity relate to each other. Quite often these two terms are confused to such an extent that it is hard to distinguish between the two clearly: what makes a personality of an individual and what ---identity? When we speak about individual differences do we draw a borderline between personality and identity? Are these two independent notions or two words denoting one concept? It is quite clear however that these two notions are deeply interrelated. Obviously, personality as a category describing a complex of observed personal reactions to reality could be described in many ways. As the permanent

template of behavior (Guiora, 1980) the term personality has fascinated many generations of scholars in different fields. It is hard to find a more attractive subject for humans than investigation of personality since people will permanently generate explanations for the actions of other people they observe (Ryckman, 2004). At the same time it is even harder to find a more heterogeneously defined concept than personality (Brinich & Shelley, 2002). Each researcher brings her perspective and understanding of personality to disciplines such as psychology, philosophy, and education. Moreover, each field is literally abundant with different, sometimes quite opposite and unexpected perspectives of the target term. According to Ryckman (2004) there are following theoretical perspectives on personality: *psychoanalytic and neoanalytic* (Freud, 1962; Jung, 1954, 1958) *individual psychology* (Adler, 1927), *social and cultural psychoanalysis* (Horney, 1942), *humanistic psychoanalysis* (Fromm, 1947), *psychoanalytic ego psychology* (Erikson, 1958,1972), *trait* perspectives (Allport, 1937), *cognitive* perspectives (Kelly,1955), *social-behaviouristic* perspectives (Skinner, 1938), *humanistic-existential* perspectives (Maslow, 1962; Roger, 1961) to name a few. Different in form and angle of scientific investigation, the theories of personality nevertheless confirm the "virtual impossibility of defining the term "personality" precisely" (Ryckman, 2004). Notwithstanding that target term can never be unambiguously defined, I will retrieve a number of definitions, or rather descriptions for comparison to somewhat clarify a conceptual paradigm of *personality*. Etymologically, the word "personality" originates from the Latin *persona*, which means *mask*. It is interesting to note that in the ancient Latin-speaking theatre, the mask was not used as a plot device to *disguise* the identity of a character, but rather was employed to *typify* that character (Encyclopedia Britannica, 2006). This indicates the primary connection between the person's awareness of herself revealed through *typical* behavior in certain

situations. Not accidentally, Watson (1930) and Skinner (1953) conclude that only observable behavior that can be recorded is important and worth including into any comprehensible theory (cited in Ryckman, 2004). Quite contrary to psychoanalytical theories abundant with vague explanations of instinctive drives and subconscious impulses (Erikson,1959 ;Freud, 1962) or complicated hierarchies of archetypes dominating personality (Jung, 1923), the behaviourist position left no space for any interpretations of "mind", "spirit", "souls", and " consciousness" as these notions do not represent phenomena repeatedly observed and thus subjected to prediction. Later research manifested a broader look at personality--as a dynamic system of typical responses to typical situations: for example, Allport (1937, cited in Ryckman) poses that personality is "what a man really is..., it is a dynamic organization within the individual of those psychophysical systems that determine his characteristic behavior and thought". Cattell (1965, cited in Ryckman) provides a simpler definition: personality "…tells what (a person) will do when placed in a given situation". Personality is also viewed as "a collective term which encompasses all of individual's overt (observable) and covert (internal) behaviors (thoughts and feelings). These behaviors are "perceived by the individual or others as having a unity, that is, of being consistent and characteristic" (Martin, 1991, p.374). On analyzing those definitions, it appears that some scholars, behaviorists in particular, seem to be trapped in rather limited schema of personality treating it mostly as an observed behavior. Even Martin (1991) who actually mentions feelings and thoughts as characteristic aspects of personality, rather parsimoniously calls them internal *behaviors*. To me this is not quite adequate, as behavior is an act, tangible and observable, while thought may not be realized as an act, yet it may characterize personality. Such an approach is limited for it excludes many other factors of personality development, just as Freud's (1962) psychoanalytical sexism does what

is criticized by Horney (1926). She openly argued against Freud's equation of the concept of *human* with the concept of *man*. Therefore, theoretical insights that focus only on given behavior and exclude or neglect individual experience do not impress me as precise and valid. Conversely, the awareness of who people are and who they can be due to the ability to change and move towards self-actualization (Maslow, 1968; Rogers, 1961), seem more justifiable. For that reason I would support *humanistic theories* (Maslow, 1968, 1970; Rogers,1959*)* which are less concerned with purely scientific aspects of personality and more focused on the importance of personal freedom, experience and growth (Martin, 1991). Choosing the working term for the present research among the obviously subjective definitions provided above I would argue that personality embraces a unique blend of perceptions, feelings, ideas, and views as cause of potential behavior *and* acts of behavior as means of their expression. Putting more stress on perceptions, feelings, and ideas as the primary stimuli of action, I would regard this approach to personality as much more plausible, inclusive and relevant to the research of identity dynamics in SLA and the language ego phenomenon.

Notably, the above mentioned paradigm of personal characteristics is relatively continuous in time and space and rests upon unconscious and conscious mind, as opposed to the concept of *identity,* which more describes the state of a person's mind depending on consciousness, and not on the substance of either the soul or the body described by Locke.While the issue of personality mostly focuses on choices of attitudes, behaviors and actions per se, the issue of identity mostly concerns conditions for those choices or environmental stimuli that cause the emergence of certain behavioural patterns or motives to adopt it. No less a multifaceted concept, *identity* refers to self- awareness, self-identification with a certain system of beliefs or pattern of behaviour.

It is manifested through a conscious sense of direction towards integration of all previous psychosocial experiences (Ryckman, 2004). If *personality* conceptually rests mostly on a combination of mental processes based on psychically inborn or environmentally acquired traits, *identity* is grounded in self-identification in relation to others. It can be assumed that personality includes possibilities for the development of identity, or to be more exact, more than one identity, learned as a result of participation in a variety of social contexts. Numerous self-images that personality creates in the process of identification to belonging to certain groups, family, church, school (Evans cited in Ryckman, 2004) provide a wide variety of templates for the development of multiple identities.

This process is particularly evident in SLA practice. Language, as the implement of material function of ethnicity and its subjective constituent (Fishman, 1999) presents a unique tool for the learner to connect to the respective constituent of ethnicity related to L2. By doing so the learner initially explores and identifies that ethnicity as a certain system ramified in social, psychological, historical, political, cultural interactions, and then builds up her own understanding of that new system, or penetrates into an *ethnic* identity. As Fishman (1999) poses, "Although language has rarely been equated with the totality of ethnicity, it has, in certain historical, regional, and disciplinary contexts, been accorded priority within that totality" (p.4). No wonder the ethnic revival of the postcolonial period particularly stressed the development of language of marginalised communities (Haddock & Sutch, 2003). Further Fishman (1991) fairly suggests, "How and when the link between language and ethnicity comes about, its saliency and potency, its waxing and waning, its inevitability and the possibility of its sundering, all need to be examined"(p.4). The more understanding of the processes language

learners have to face, the more community and educational assistance can be rendered.

Another perspective that equates with the presented assumptions on personality and identity is a *theory of self-concept*, holding that *personality* includes unconscious and therefore hardly explained or controlled drives, while *identity* starts when a person consciously recognizes certain patterns and strives towards either matching them or, conversely rejecting such. Descartes and later Freud (1962) followed by Lecky (1945), Raimy (1948) and Rogers (1947) proposed views on how humans see themselves over time based on encounters with reality. These views gradually grew into a theory connecting the results of human activities with how people learn to see themselves and their relations to others. Being in constant touch with reality people create self-images or self-concepts based on analyzing how nice, bad, appropriate, inappropriate, etc. they might have been or might have *seemed* to others. This theory helps to conclude that personality is a more stable, enveloping category of the "sustained self", while identity has a more unstable, changing and situation-oriented nature. Interestingly, we can say *What a nice personality she has!* , but we can never say *What a nice identity she has!* despite both categories are perceived through socially contextualized actions. The process of self-evaluation is inherent in humans and it serves as the basis for developing certain conceptual models (beliefs, hierarchies) and corresponding behavioural patterns. Thus, the essence of identity is revealed through dynamic, changing, appropriately chosen images the personality generates to respond to the conflicting needs for belonging or individuation, relatedness to or separation (Landis, 1970) from the outer plane. In sum, both dimensions belong to the entity of *being* (Heidegger, 1971) or *self*, the cumulative term widely used in psychoanalytic community in the last twenty years (Brinich & Shelley, 2002).

Ego and its boundaries in psychoanalytic theories

As was indicated before, the basic concepts targeted in the proposed research come to SLA from psychology and psychoanalysis. Initially introduced by Freud (1962) in his "structural theory", and developed by Jung (1958*), ego,* along with *id and super-ego* were described as constituents or the divisions of the psyche, (the Greek concept of the self, soul and mind (Encyclopedia Britannica, 2006)). By these new terms Freud (1962) depicted the dynamic and challenging relations between the conscious and unconscious of the mind. While *id* contains the unconscious impulses, *ego* oppositely encompasses the conscious part of psyche, dealing with the external reality. *Ego* refers to the very intimate, intrapersonal dimension of human entity; however its functions are quite imaginable (Table 1, Appendix 3). According to Landis (1970): Ego includes awareness of values, goals, emotions, moods, attitudes; it extends

to the ways, blatant and subtle, in which the person experiences his

relationships, his possessions, and his body, as well as his past life, the present

moment, and his hopes for the future. The ego, then, is the aspect of personality

that refers to the immediate experience of one's personal existence, as

differentiated both from events that refer to the external world, and from

unconscious phenomena, for these are not ordinarily included in what a person

calls "I" or "me". (p.2)

It can be admitted that this definition to a large extent clarifies the obscure Freudian contemplations related mostly to the sexual aspects of human experiences and Jungian exceedingly esoteric revelations. Landis's (1970) explanation of a continuum of human's self-world embraces functioning "from isolation to fusion, …, from "establishment of a self that is distinct from, yet related to, the environment (p.2) It considerably correlates

with the previous discussion presented in this review on personality and identity. It again demonstrates that a core of human psychological make-up, the *ego* represents that part of personality that constantly consciously evaluates the external conditions and creates cognitive and affective patterns of behavior adequate for certain situation. In a word, it participates in the development of identity. Continuously equilibrating between the "self" and the "others", analyzing the ways which provide the most effective performance and choosing the roles to adopt, *ego* has also the function of preserving the core of personality. Recurrently subjected to outer influences and changes, "threatened" and "attacked" by challenges of the alternative modes of order, existence, and expression, human ego mobilizes its defensive qualities for the sake of keeping its uniqueness at any rate. Trapped between everchanging reality and struggle not to lose itself and yet correspond to social schemata in order to be accepted, ego extrapolates its qualities onto personality as vulnerable, defensive, and cautious protective filter. What it supposedly does is strain events and ideas, choosing either to hold them within, modify them if found expedient for self-growth or throw them back to the outer world, thus maintaining the personality essence. According to the summarized insights from the literature, it can be stated then that ego enormously influences the personality evolution. Moreover, the virtual space it establishes within a personality by demarcation lines of its protected territory must play a special role in the processes of the identity negotiation discussed above.

This leads to the conceptualization of another psychological dimension related to selfhood, namely *ego boundaries*. The concept comes from sleep research performed by Hartmann (1991) who designed a bipolar scale and psychological test, the Hartmann Boundary Questionnaire (HBQ), to measure the dimension of certain internal states in patients with sleep nightmares. Being interested in differences between people with various degrees of investigated qualities marked out in their daily life, Hartmann (1991)

distributed a range of tendencies on a bipolar scale so that at one extreme of the scale fall such categories as *meticulousness, orderliness, non-receptiveness*, while at the other ---- opposite categories, such as*, receptiveness* and *extrasensitivity.* The name for the "lowest" extreme characteristics is *thick ego boundaries*; in contrast, the highest extreme of characteristics is called *thin ego boundaries*.

Bearing in mind the similarity between *ego* as agency of self and *language ego* as the linguistic constituent of ego, the linguistic ego can be similarly described as firm, defensive, vulnerable, possessive, etc. or conversely, fluid, flexible, adaptive, interactive, etc. By examining the diverse ways of ego and its boundaries' functioning within a person, we can hypothetically transfer their common qualities to a linguistic component of personality, language ego, and investigate its functions alike. The functional firmness or flexibility of boundaries between environment and ego depends on many factors, among which I would mention individual characteristics of the person (Landis, 1970) and intensiveness of the external influence (particularly, educational intervention) as the most significant ones. The term *ego boundaries* embodies the structural concept of certain boundaries "that differentiate the phenomenal self in varying degrees 1) from those aspects of the personality not represented in consciousness, and 2) from the world of reality external to the person, as psychologically experienced" (Landis, 1970, p.1).

Put more simply, if ego represents the core of personality, ego boundaries can be understood as the relatively extended space or "territory" of its influence revealed through the interaction with different realms of reality. The degree of this self-derived expansion, its openness or closedness, most vividly observed by an ability to transform is expressed in a variety of personal qualities, mainly adaptability, tolerance and sensitivity.

Hartmann's (1991) approach states that thinner boundaries might bestow an advantage in which transferal of mental set or new ways of thinking are required. The concern though in this model is that it categorizes people into prototypes attached to certain occupations. For instance, people with *thick ego boundaries* are called "naval officers", while *thin ego boundaries'* personalities are those contributing to art, philosophy, and more refined areas. Although seemingly true, it reminds me yet of a division of people into lyricists and physicists in post-Stalinist Soviet Union, when it was almost a rule to belong either to "poets" or "scientists", as those two occupations were considered most necessary for the development of the Soviet "democracy"; while poets inspired masses by their ideological slogans and songs, scientists developed the country's industrial potential. Stereotyping though has never been a better explanation of reality, as it lazily attempts to typify diverse categories for the sake of easier control over them. Moreover, there are plenty of examples when a person of a profession not related to arts, has a hobby of painting pictures or writing poems --- I wonder what type of ego boundaries she might have. In short, it seems reasonable that educators should employ those models that explain processes and their agents rather than label them, focusing on proofs of advantageous qualities thin ego boundaries confer to their bearers, namely flexibility, permeability and tolerance to ambiguities. At the same time as a researcher, I would like to explore the mechanism of ego boundaries' potential changes and in case the boundaries really can extend, I would ponder over a possibility of intervention that can facilitate that extension. It is my hope that in language learning having *thick ego boundaries* does not mean a sentence without parole….

Language in psychoanalytical theories: Nature of "symbolic"

The term *language ego* is among the least employed in SLA theory and especially practice. There are some possible reasons for that: on one hand the term calls for an evident psychoanalytical dimension of its understanding which apparently narrows its practicability in language learning. On the other, it stems from the two complex domains, namely psychology of personality and language acquisition. Each of those represents a wide range of views, often quite contradictory. There can be another reason for the scarce use of that term in the SLA field: it may seem somewhat eclectic being drawn from a variety of sources and styles what accounts for its under use. Perhaps that ambiguity particularly attracted my attention as a researcher as it is always exciting to explore phenomena less pronounced in the field. Hopefully, the proposed study will satisfy not only my personal interest in the role of *language ego* in SLA but inform other EAL educators about the diverse perspectives on identity dynamics in EAL learners. Coined by Alexander Guiora in 1981 to describe the extent to which learners cope with their inhibitions in L2 learning and how administration of certain agents can reduce these inhibitions (Guoira, 1981, 1984), the term *language ego* was used later by Erhman, (1996) who explored the range of the personal ability to accept new information in ESL classroom. Quantitative as it was, her research assessed the influence of individual characteristics of learner's personality on the language learning where the terms *ego boundaries* and *tolerance of ambiguity* constituted the two critical variables. Although the process of language learning is profoundly influenced by learners' individual differences grounded in psychological and socio-cultural attributes characterizing any personality, they yet could be hardly completely systematized, categorized and therefore measured. Being the factors continuously varying in learners,

personal characteristics could not be seen as determinants which can be linearly

employed by a theory based on questionable measurements. It is hard to imagine what

measuring units educators can use to estimate, say the extent of a learner's adaptability

to the L2 phonological system, or the speed of her ability to incorporate recently

acquired vocabulary. Oddly enough, the studies on individual dimensions of learners'

personality initially applied methods that did not seem to serve the task appropriately.

What task these studies did serve was to stimulate interest in further investigating the

influence of individual differences on language learning, a part of which includes the

phenomenon of *language ego.* A more recent theory of Dynamic Systems of SLA

(Cook, 2000; Hansen & Chen, 2002) can illustrate that. According to this theory,

language learning experiences engage a number of language specific subsystems that

dynamically interact. This view presumes a learner's complicated involvement into the

integrated system of elements from different languages. Development of linguistic

competence is seen as a changeable interactive activity rather than a mechanistic

building up of L2 sounds, vocabulary, grammar and syntactic rules. Moreover, as De

Bot, Lowie, & Verspoor (2005) stated, the language system of an individual is also

"considered as a dynamic system in its own right, which changes over time due to a

complex interaction of a wide range of factors" (p.16). In this respect, the phenomena

related to the complicated interaction between L1 and L2 viewed through the prism of

the learner's individuality may significantly account not only for the development of L2

acquisition but for the dynamics of how the learner sees herself in that interaction. That

is to say, the self- representation of the learner in a new language and its space

depends on a number of correlated factors, amalgamating psychological, cultural,

social, ideological domains as well as highly contextual, discursive practices. How the

learner represents herself is based on how she identifies herself in the L2 linguistic

environment. As a social practice language requires a high adequacy of productive-

receptive modes of communication determined by how well the speaker identifies herself within the context of speech. When the learner constructs the meaning ascribed to her utterance she needs to know how she relates to the conditions of discourse (Norton, 1999). That is her identity based on the feeling of connection to that context influences the quality of the speech. Noticeably, the process of building up the L2 competence transpires simultaneously with negotiation of the learner's identity in the new context. The complicated process of how the learner shapes her identity or sense of belonging to the realia of L2 environment leads to the idea to explore the concept of language ego. To understand the idea of the *language ego* and locate its position and significance in SLA theory and practice it is important to return to its nominal origin – a theory of psychoanalysis that generated the term *ego.* Along with that it is necessary to summarize the related concepts including the role of *conscious* and *unconscious* as well as *symbolic* in language across the more recent psychoanalytic views.

 Role of language in ego development.

    As indicated above, the view of the *psyche* or the *self* belongs to the most complicated and ambiguous concepts of psychology due to its multiaccentuated nature. Psychoanalysis endeavored to systematize the dynamical processes taking place within the self of an individual who interacts with the outer world through external and internal perceptions. Different psychoanalytic thinkers have parallel yet wide-ranging views on the intricate manifestations of this interaction. Freud (1962) was the first to offer his classical idea of *id*, e*go* and *super-ego* to describe components of the human psyche*.*

He used the term *ego* to refer to human mind, particularly its conscious domain. "Consciousness" derives from Latin *conscientia* which primarily means *moral conscience*. It is associated with the subjective ability of an individual to analyse her relationship with the environment or her actions directed to that environment based on the knowledge of mores. To put simply, it's a human quality of being aware of what one is and what one does. Opposed to consciousness, *unconsciousness* placed in the *id,* literally means the lack of such awareness; it is regarded as an alteration of human mind when an individual does not know what she does. From the point of view of analytic practice though, *unconscious* represents the latent form of being *conscious* rather than purely medical state of being out of one's mind, lacking consciousness. That is to say, in practice the human mind operates on the levels of two described psychical constituents simultaneously. The *unconscious* part is viewed by Freud as passive, latent and submersive but not absent in the moment of consciousness. While the conscious part is actively involved in every moment of life, the unconscious part acts as sort of a reflective and absorptive mirror of human perceptions and emotions. As Freud (1962) explained, " the state of consciousness is very transitory; an idea that is conscious now is no longer so a moment later, although it can become so under certain conditions that are easily brought about. …. *unconscious* coincides with "latent and capable of becoming conscious"" (p.4). Moreover, Freud introduced another term to further explain a close bond between the *conscious* and *unconscious*, namely *preconscious*, which described a state of mind closer to conscious. It is that part of unconscious that is latent but ready to become active at any moment. It is presumed to store up all memories that can be easily accessed by the conscious mind.The *unconscious* versus *preconscious* reflects the most repressed ideas that can hardly become conscious.

Ego is presented as one of the main constituents of human individuality responsible for "a coherent organization of mental processes" (Freud, 1962, p.7), namely its conscious part. At the same time it is mentioned that *ego* could be unconscious as well. Although the complexity of the processes analyzed evoked contradictory explanations, ego has been widely accepted as a concept of an individual mental agency which "supervises all its own constituent processes, and which goes to sleep at night, though even then it exercises censorship on dreams" (Freud, 1962, p.7). Despite the original intricate theory which introduced the term ego, the use of such words as *ego* and *egoism* in everyday life has become quite common. Most frequently *ego* is viewed as the agency which an individual's subjectivity derives from. From the very beginning though it became clear that construction of psychic reality could never be clearly and unequivocally described. Yet that does not mean it can not be investigated.

Almost simultaneously with Freud, Karl Jung presented his views on the psychic entity of human individuality in his *Psychology of the Unconscious* (1912), developing the concepts of conscious and unconscious further. However, he divided the unconscious into two other parts: the *personal unconscious* and the *collective unconscious.* The personal unconscious to Jung is a collection of subjective experiences that have been once conscious but stored or suppressed, whereas the collective unconscious is the innermost layer of psyche that accumulates inherited experiences or "a reservoir of the experiences of our species" (Jung, 1970). To be more exact, Jung attributed the unconscious to certain archetypes that all humans are predisposed to inherently. Focusing mainly on the unconscious part of the psyche, Jung saw archetypes as universal schematic images and ideas that all humans share on the unconscious level. The personal part of the psyche associated with Freudian *ego*

or *personal conscious* reveals the archetypes on a subjective, individual level. Thus, Jung supported Freudian idea that ego interacts actively with the unconscious part of the psyche. The harmony between the two can be established by a balanced interaction. Jung explained such an interaction through a theory of symbolic themes and behavioral patterns that are universally employed across all cultures and times as well as by each individual. While Jung concentrated his theorizing on the collective consciousness, the works of Jacques-Marie-Émile Lacan (1901-1981) focused on the ego, identification, and language as a critical component of subjectivity privileging unconscious. Lacan is famous for claiming that "the unconscious is constituted like a language-based, rather than an essence –based entity" (Brinich & Shelley, 2002, p.17). His return to Freud actually ended up with a substantial revision of Freudian concepts and further development of the theory explaining them. According to Lacan (1968), language makes the fundamental origin of the felt self. To illustrate how language is linked to the formation of the self, he introduces the concept of a *mirror phase* (stade du miroir) to explain the role of the other in childhood when "the child will impute his own actions to another" (p.159). The term has been borrowed from biology where the imitation of the same species' actions is crucial in the normal process of maturation. The experiments showed that without watching the others, the maturing process in animals will be delayed and even a mirror could restore its normal pace being placed in the animal's cage. Relating the influence of the mirror effect to human development, Lacan brings in the analogy to the development of human self when a child seeing his image in the mirror as an image of another human being "discovers a form (Gestalt), a corporeal unity that is lacking to him at this particular stage of his development" (Lacan, 1968, p.160). Thus, at an early stage of development of human identity "*moi,* the *ego* is another, ideal self, and the mirror stage serves as the initial source of all later

identifications. Not surprisingly, almost all children have a tendency to talk about themselves from the third person calling themselves by the name, say "Nick ate", "Nick slept" rather than using "I" ate, and "I" slept.

The mirror stage has a noteworthy symbolic dimension. Perceiving the objects of the world as primary images bearing certain meaning, the child develops her understanding of self through imaginary relationship to real objects, thus attributing certain symbols to building the picture of the world. As a result, the *real*, the *imaginary* and the *symbolic* represent three constituents of *ego* formation. *Symbolic* to Lacan is expressed through language as a system of signification when the very instrument of the word is idea-symbol: "The result is that the particular effects of the element of language are intimately linked to the existence of the set or whole, anterior to any possible liaison with any particular experience of the subject" (Lacan, 1968, p.37). More importantly, Lacan believed that "The mirror stage instructs us that the child must become two in order to become one. The self comes to see it as a mirror image of its real self….This initial process of self constitution serves as a paradigm for all subsequent relations; the self is always finding itself through reflections in the Other"(Tong cited in Brinich & Shelley, 2002, pp.17-18). This idea opens a whole philosophical dimension in Lacanian teachings pertaining to the role of otherness with respect to the subject. The complex subject-object relationship in this dimension is relevant to the present study in terms of Lacanian attribution of "subjectivity to language understood as a structure, the symbolic order as the legal fabric of human culture, and the Freudian unconscious" (Chiesa, 2007, p.8). As Lacan claims," man speaks therefore, but it is because the symbol has made him man" (1968, p.39). To summarize, Lacan's views on the ego development reflect the essence of the self-identification development through the entry to symbols of objects and concepts expressed

in language and its cultural domain. The view of the language as *the symbolic* rooted in the societal and cultural notions of a particular group is central to explain influence of the language on ego and identity development. According to Sarup (1992), Lacan focuses "on what is distinctively human in the human mind, on the cultural rather than the "natural" determining forces, and on anthropology and sociology rather than on biology" (p.11). Therefore, the relationship of an individual with a specific language and the culture associated with it turns our mind to the important paradigm of the proposed study: the impact of the mother tongue and the second language acquisition on the development of the most subjective agency of the self, *ego* which is.

The advance of ego's capacity to create symbols of the external world and make itself operate within the symbolic system of language is analyzed in more recent psychoanalytic theories elaborated by Melanie Klein and Julia Kristeva. If Klein (1975) mainly focuses on the role of *anxiety* as the major emotion that the child makes the start from to identify herself at an early stage, Kristeva (1989) mostly specifies the concept of *abjection* as the dominant one in that process. According to Klein (1975),

> The child's earliest reality is wholly fantastic; he is surrounded with objects of anxiety...As the ego develops, a true relation to reality is gradually established out of this unreal reality. Thus, the development of the ego and the relation to reality depend on the ego's capacity at a very early period to tolerate the pressure of anxiety-situations. And, as usual it is a question of the optimum balance of the factors concerned. A sufficient quantity of anxiety is the necessary basis for an abundance of symbol-formation and of fantasy; an adequate capacity on the part of ego is to be satisfactory worked over; if this basic phase is to have a favorable issue and is the development of the ego is to be successful. (p.238)

It is evident that numerous stressful encounters with the outer world provide the child with the ways of objects' identification as well as her place in that world. Moreover, the defence against any destructive impulses that inevitably accompany that process are seen as the major impediment to self development. It brings "symbol-formation to a standstill" which ultimately results in "defective capacity for speech" (Klein, 1975, p.241). Obviously, this view demonstrates that the character of symbolic representations directly affects self- identification and ways of verbal interpretations of such. Klein's model of *discovery of the objects - anxiety of relating to them – encoding into symbolic - self- identification – verbal interpretation* has some similar ideas with that of Kristeva's. Clearly, both thinkers treat the child's experience with reality as traumatic. However, Kristeva's concept of abjection constructs even a more dramatic situation: human mind creates self-identification only as a result of a trauma of letting go something that inherently belongs to the body and something it would still like to keep (Kristeva, 1980). The detached nature of some bodily functions illustrates the idea of abjection or exarticulation of oneself moving beyond the order of symbolic. Most importantly, individuals have to separate themselves from the object that created them, (a mother, for instance) to construct an identity. Through subjectivity realized in speech, the human being forms herself. To describe how language establishes relations between *an object, representation and interpretation*, Kristeva (1989) uses the theory of Charles Sanders Peirce, who stated that" The first act of symbolization was symbolization in and by means of language" (p.13). Later on, she borrows a term of *semiotic* from Ferdinand de Saussure's theory of linguistic signs based on signification and communication. For her, semiotic stage refers to the pre-mirror stage of human development, when the emotions are related to the basic instinctive drives and the pre-denominative linguistic expressions of such, i.e. those grounded in primordial, initial combinations of sounds, or "pre-dictionary" meanings of words. As examples of such, Kristeva (1989) uses

gestures, dance, poetry, or similar practices that "as languages seem less obvious" (p.303). Thus, she opposes the idea of *symbolic* which has a more "mathematical correspondence" of constructed meaning, to *semiotic*, the emotional force that precedes the precise construction of meaning. Therefore symbol formation as a fundamental capacity of the human mind finds its reflection in an ability to speak and relate to the world in a manipulative fashion vital to its development. As Blum (1978) puts, "In advanced form, a symbolic process may have multiple functions which operate with varying degrees of competence, efficiency and flexibility" (p.456). Thus unconscious symbolic expression paths the avenue for analytic interpretations of the world what finds its ultimate form in speech. That coincides with the view of language as *Symbolic Action* suggested by Burke (1989); seeing human beings as symbol-users, he emphasizes the role of language as the agency not separated from action where "the situation within which the actor acts is defined and understood by the actor through the concepts available to him "(p.11).

To summarize, across psychoanalytic theories:

- the concept of *ego* is associated with the inner sense of the felt self, being constantly formed in the continuous act of self-identification and separation from the outer world (See Table 1, Appendix 3).

- self-identification starts at an early stage of human development and results in construction of identity in referral to the contextualized situation;

- subjectivity as the representation of *ego* is born through the interactions with the *Other* (i.e. the other subject) where speech appears as a medium for self-identification and intersubjective relationship;

- language as system of signs/ symbols plays a determinative role in the ego formation: the ego is developed through the entry into linguistic symbolization;

- emotional domain serves as the critical background for the process of ego development and identity construction; of most significant emotions anxiety and abjection related to the ego's defensive qualities play a decisive role.

Theories of language and learner's identity in SLA

Now it is necessary to consider how the concepts of personality and identity are treated in SLA theory. According to Ellis (1997), educators view the students' personality as one of the major factors of either successful or ineffective second language learning. Griffiths (1991) provides survey data from England, Japan and Oman showing that personality traits, such as extroversion and introversion largely influence the process of L2 learning. Specifically, according to this study, extroverts are more likely to succeed in oral language practices, while introverts get better results in receptive skills, reading, for example. At the same time, Ellis (1997) states that despite the awareness of how personality related variables are important in SLA, the research in the field lacks a more conclusive data on such influence. There are several reasons for that: 1) personality variables relate to very different dimensions of theorizing (some constructs are taken from well-established theories, while others are vaguely shaped, risk-taking, for instance), 2) they relate so differently to each other that it is hard to analyze any correlation, for example between self-esteem and inhibition, 3) chosen instruments to measure the target variables' are doubtful which raises questions about research validity and reliability, as mostly they are based on rather subjective insights. As a result, to determine how accurately they measure what they are supposed to measure becomes problematic.

Role of emotions and affect in SLA

Language learning invokes both cognitive and affective responses in individual. Paying deserved tribute to the significance of the cognitive processes involved in language acquisition, the purpose of this study requires a focus on the affective attributes of such involvement. As a number of researchers pose, when a person who has been brought up by one culture is put in circumstances of communicating with another culture, his response may embrace the whole range of emotions: anxiety, fright, confusion, embarrassment, disappointment, aversion, in short deep emotional discomfort (Arnold, 1999; Gardner & Lambert, 1959; Pavlenko, 2005; Valdes, 1986). Such a response may be even stronger in cases where the encounter is caused by study of another language, for "such a predicament may be very threatening, and until the threat is removed, language learning may be blocked" (Valdes, 1986, p. vii). Affect, as Arnold (1999) notes, refers to the purposive and emotional sides of a person's reactions to what is going on. I would add that affective experiences are crucial in the process of perceiving new information with its subsequent acquisition dramatically influencing both the quality and quantity of the information accommodated. When the affective needs of students are not met, their cognitive planes seem gradually to deteriorate and even impede the learning process till a full stop is reached. Having said that, we should not accept the simplistic version of affective needs as a set of "sentimental manipulation" methods, as Arnold (1999) calls them. A pattern when teachers are just nice and friendly, trying to please their students by any means, does not provide for effective learning. What really works is when a combination of affective and cognitive needs equally addressed, when the feeling part and needs part (Arnold, 1999) comprise a consistently recreated whole. Pavlenko (2006) moves even further in exploring the influence of affect in SLA, and cognitive needs equally addressed, when the feeling part and needs part (Arnold, 1999) comprise a consistently recreated whole.

Pavlenko (2006) moves even further in exploring the influence of affect in SLA, shifting from the analysis of single emotions in SLA (almost always *anxiety* and *inhibition*) or cross-cultural expressions of emotions to "diversity of multilingual trajectories and linguistic constellations that result in very different relationships between languages and attitudes toward them" (p.42). Her study on *Emotions and Multilingualism* (2006) presents a multi-dimensional insight into complicated paradigms between affective attitudes of learners and languages studied, addressing the influence of historically shaped emotional memory, causes of linguistic choices rooted in L1 and transferred to L2, and ELLs's reactions to increase in domination of Anglo discourses of emotions. Pavlenko (2006) impacts the present research, discussing how bilinguals express emotions in their respective languages and how the chosen "affect repertoires may contribute to the perception of distinct" bilingual selves"" (p.42).

It should be noted that the relationship between the affect and language learning is bidirectional (Arnold, 1999). Undoubtedly, by addressing affect in learning educators stimulate students' interest and performance, while in turn, the language classroom provides endless opportunities for development of learners' L2 affective identity.
To a large extent, anxiety in any language learning process is connected with the desire for acceptance in the new societal environments that push risk-taking of a learner's mind. Therefore, understanding emotions as basic signifiers of human reactions to reality in general, and modifiers of the SLA success in particular, must be brought into SLA theory and practice on a more pronounced level.

Notwithstanding that a number of scholars deem questions related to identity are not critical to theories of language, Norton (1997) believes that L2 educators need to look into them seriously. She admits, that "The relationship between language and identity is an intriguing one, partly because debates on theories of language are as inconclusive and indeterminate as the debates of theories of identity" (1997, p. 409). Yet that is what

makes this topic so appealing: its multi-dimensional paradigm. Particularly, it intersects two areas of research inquiry that have been always attractive to me: psychology and TESOL. Despite certain limitations linked to the psychology of personality, namely impossibility of exclusive description or measurement of personality related qualities, such intersection provides researcher an opportunity to study the combination of both psychological and linguistic phenomena emerging in the learner's interaction with the social world. Following Norton (1997; 2000; 2005) I would take the position that a learner's identity is viewed as relationship to the world constructed across time and space. I also think that the concept of learner's *investment* in the target language based on motivation to achieve certain personal goals in the new social setting frames realistic approaches to the dynamics of identity in SLA. I have chosen a similar position because to me learners' identification of who they are, what group they belong to, what linguistic and other choices they will make, (the awareness and understanding of their identities) a) shape the character of their social interactions, b) maintain their abilities to adapt to the imperatives of the environment, c) direct their goals and ways how to achieve them. The most appealing aspect of such an approach is that the learner is not seen as a passive object of instruction, a vessel to pour knowledge into, but as an active participant of the learning process who is aware of who she is and therefore what she can do for herself to realize her plans in future. This proactive position of self-awareness ("Who am I?") and the future prospect's consideration ("What can I do?") promotes success much more effectively than an overreliance on ESL programs no matter how innovative they might be. From my personal L2 teaching/ learning experience I know that even the best teachers and programs can not reach the student if she is passively waiting for a miracle to happen. SLA is a hard work and I don't share deceptive promises some programs advertise inviting students to have fun or just watch how super efficient strategies will work for them (or instead of them?). "All you have to do -

just half an hour a day of listening to our cassettes and you will start speaking Spanish! French! Mandarin!" I also think teachers who try to stimulate students' positive response to SL learning by ignoring inevitable frustrations during the "plateau" phase are also making a disservice to learners. The more valuable is the approach when the teacher honestly admits possible difficulties, quite normal in the beginning of intermediate stages of SL learning, so that learners do not fall into low self-esteem patterns on encountering these difficulties. More so, when students do feel disappointed, embarrassed and discouraged by either slow or no progress at all, the teacher's role is to sympathetically advise how to be patient and persistent in overcoming problems common to many learners. Having demonstrated adherence to the social identity theory (Taifel, 1981 cited in Norton; Heller, 1987; Gumperz, 1982; Norton, 1997), especially the concept of investment, I would not overestimate the influence of social/community constraints on the identity development as a sole modifier of the learner's identity. I argue that we should consider psychological inclination to adapt to new patterns as no less significant catalyst for successful identity development. To this end, I would focus on the psychological aspects of personal adaptability affecting SL learning.

Another standpoint in relation to identity in SLA that I would willingly adopt is connected with *theory of subjectivity* drawn from the poststructuralist feminist tradition (Lacan, 1933; Weedon, 1987). Its essence can be expressed in describing subjectivity as a) human agency, b) a multiple, non-unitary phenomenon; c) emerging in a variety of social sites; d) changing over time; e) conceived as a site of struggle (Bakhtin, 1986; Vygotsky, 1978 cited in Ricento; Bourdieu, 1977; Weedon, 1987; cited in Norton). I find this approach useful for the way it describes the conflicted, ever changing and negotiated nature of the learner's identity shifting from the stereotypical perpetuation of characteristics of learners' belonging to particular social, ethnic, religious groups, etc. As Ricento (2005) concludes, "Rather, identity is theorized as a contingent process

involving dialectic relations between learners and the various worlds and experiences they inhabit and which act on them" (p.49). These insights revealing dialectic, multi-dimensional paradigms of learner's identity present particular interest for me as a researcher and educator. Treating learner's identity formation as an individually shaped and socially contextualized process, where "subjectivity and language are mutually constitutive" (Norton, 1997), it can be assumed that subjectivity may refer to and operate within that process like a cumulative property of personal perceptions which interacts with the outer world, evaluates it, creates patterns of adaptation. This assumption echoes with the target phenomenon of the present study, *language ego,* which apparently represents one of the core personality related components subjectivity rests upon. For that reason acceptance of the theoretical framework mentioned above will help to effectuate the target inquiry. It would be unfair not to mention the importance of power relations which obviously occupy the central place in the theory of subjectivity (Cummins, 1996; West, 1992; Bourdieu, 1977). The subject is perceived by these theorists "as both subject of and subject to relations of power within a particular site, community, and society" (Norton, 1997). Further on, the coercive and collaborative relations of power are analyzed in terms of marginalizing or empowering impact on the learner. Quite deep and greatly expanding on the views of L2 learner's social interactions influencing identity dynamics, these speculations nevertheless would not be considered in the present study as they seem to bear a strong political agenda falling beyond the scope of the research questions formulated above.

Theory of intercultural communication

One more noteworthy framework that influences considerably the nature of the proposed research topic relates to *theory of intercultural communication* (Bennet, 1993; Paige, 1993), *intercultural adjustment* (Grove & Torbjorn,1985) and *cultural marginality*

(Bennet, 1993).The purpose of these theories is to conceptualize processes that happen with an individual who has to communicate with cultures other than her own, or who relocates to a foreign environment from a perspective of cognitive and motivational psychology. Besides explanation of the hypotheses describing the complex emotional processes that take place in cross-cultural communication, the theories also discuss the current models of cross-cultural training (Paige, 1993). All three theories are interconnected: theory of *intercultural communication* introduces models of intercultural experiences, education and training; *cultural marginality* analyses identity issues in intercultural training; theory of *intercultural adjustment* compares the behavioral patterns of person in the accustomed environment and those of the person in unaccustomed environment. Representing mostly pieces of psychological investigation rather than that of linguistic, these insights refer directly to transformative responsive processes various groups experience in the context of multicultural setting. More significantly, they introduce culture-learning skills these groups should develop in order to manage intense emotional responses while experiencing them. Thus, psychological analysis of behavioral patterns is closely linked to the practical implications of how to assist the target groups by cross-cultural training. Such elaborations set valuable examples of methods and perspectives of behavioral analysis for the purposes of my study that may lead to a deeper perception of identity formation / transformation stages.

Review of research on *language ego*

Identity issues amongst multilingual ELLs have been a focus of an extensive research for quite a while; however the research related to language ego's influence on learner's identity has not been equally addressed. The nature and complexity of the

target phenomenon, its original conceptualization rooted in dimensions of psychology and psycholinguistics, and evident lack of methodologically accurate approaches in SLA to measure the relationship between corresponding variables leave the topic rather unclear and understudied. The review of research and theorizing done in related fields like (Arnold, 1999; Brown, 2000; Ehrman, 1993; Ellis, 1997; Fishman; 1999; Guiora, 1970; Landis, 1970: Pavlenko, 2005; Valdes, 1986) and apparently demonstrates no systematic, coherent theory-based effort outlining any more or less workable models of how to apply the language ego concept to SLA practice. Nor there is a serious argument calling for a deeper investigation of that concept to facilitate language learning. On one hand, researchers unanimously hold that individual differences critically impact the learners' ability to invest successful language learning (Erhman, 1993; Norton, 2005; Skehan, 1990); on the other, they claim that since personality and identity experiences are obscure and subjected to no accurate measurement, relevant study is doomed to inconsistency and less than considerable promise (Ellis, 1999). Hence, the appeal to innate, hidden yet deeply influential individual responses of which the language ego is part, seems to be appropriate and worth more profound exploration. At a minimum, an endeavor to systematize the issues related to language ego's role in SLA to answer how feasible the transfer of its awareness to classroom practice might be worth consideration. The research on the language ego effect on language learning has been mostly presented in works of Alexander Guiora and Madeline Ehrman, who investigated

1) the extent to which learners cope with their inhibitions in language learning and

2) how administration of certain agents can reduce these inhibitions (Guoira, 1981, 1984), 2) the range of the personal ability to accept new information in an ESL classroom (Erhman, 1996).

First Guiora et al. (1972; 1980) administered low doses of active agents (alcohol and valium) in different quantities to reduce levels of personal inhibitions in learners. The participants in the experiment displayed lower levels of anxiety, which resulted in better L2 pronunciation allowing Guiora (1980) to propose a concept of a defensive individual filter, a language ego, which produces an inhibitory effect in language learning. These findings made him believe that "variations in a personality template, the consequence of individual differences either in the developmental process or genetic make-up, will have a demonstrable effect on an all important facet of second-language behavior" and more significantly, "these language behaviors can be predicted and can be experimentally manipulated" (p.173). With much tribute to Guiora as the initiator of research related to language ego and person who actually introduced the term into the scholarship, these early studies can nevertheless be perceived as problematic. Specifically, how ethically applicable is administration of alcohol to subjects with the intention of facilitating ESL practice? Could it mean that educators might consider alcohol stimulation an effective and even desirable means to extend ego boundaries? True, the relaxation properties of alcohol help people to overcome fears, frustrations, and other negative feelings. Although it might be appropriate to experiment with its doses in terms of scientific confirmation of the theoretical hypothesizing, the whole idea of influencing thick ego boundaries by means of alcohol is hardly acceptable on a more practical basis. Moreover, who can confirm that it is the extension of ego boundaries that helped subjects to perform better and not individual reaction to the chemicals in the alcohol?

Another approach was applied when Erhman & Oxford (1993; 1996) employed the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator (MBTI) of four general personality scales (Introversion-Extroversion, Sensing-Intuition, Thinking-Feeling, and Judging-Perceiving) as a measurement tool closely related to Hartmann's Boundary Questionnaire (HBQ) to

predict the relationship between the learning styles, including personality variables, such as thin/thick ego boundaries and outcomes of learning practice. They conclude that affective dimensions connected to the concept of polar ego boundaries cause learners to react accordingly to the afore-determined type, specifically thick-boundary students are disadvantaged more than thin-boundary are advantaged (Erhman, 1993).Taken as a whole, the analysis on individual differences such as ego boundaries and tolerance of ambiguity demonstrates 1) that no direct cause-effect relationships are observed; 2) relationships are mostly complex, non-linear and interpolated; 3) the proposed model of learning based on research findings proves the complexity of the target relationship. Well-substantiated theoretically as deriving from psychology and psychoanalysis, this study has a high rate of predictability and generalizability. However, from my personal perspective, it appears quite complicated as well as lacking clarity. It is hard to find any operational definitions, setting and research methods patently described, or any threats to ethics and limitations discussed. There is no indication how the extraneous variables are controlled. By all appearances, a theory-led, lower–constraint research, Erhman's (1993) study and the suggested model based on it, lack clear directions for how to actually use the obtained data. Similarly to Guiora's (1972) experiment there was no indication whether it was a blind study was made: in case the participants *were* informed of the objectives, the researcher's expectancies might have affected participants' responses, reducing internal validity. The choice and description of tools seem to be overly complicated and not clearly explained, which actually seriously threatened measurement validity. By and large, the study has both strong and weak points opening quite a vast field for further research opportunities.

In summary, the findings made by Guiora (1981) and Erhman (1993, 1996) combined with the other scholars' theorizing (Fishman, 1999; Valdes, 1986) indicate to an understanding of *language ego* as:

- a constituent of learner's personality;

- a component of learner's ethnic as well as linguistic identity;

- a cause of conflict within a learner's personality based on L1 and related ethnicity with a subsequent inhibition to L2 language acquisition;

- a resistant defensive filter that protects ego and by this creates the afore mentioned inhibition;

- a phenomenon responsible for higher/lower effectiveness of SLA based on its qualities of adaptability /non-adaptability, flexibility /non-flexibility, submission/ resistance, openness / closedness, ambiguity tolerance / intolerance.

These views considerably contribute to the understanding of the phenomena in question; however they leave remaining some unplaced pieces of the puzzle. Subsequently, the lack of consistency in the terminology, methods of research and conclusive evidence allows to assume that:1) the interaction between learner and second language as the symbolic representation of the target culture has not been deeply explored; 2) the role of language ego as a core agency of the symbolic in the language has not been introduced into the SLA theory and practice; 3) practical applications of the proposed findings are not vividly outlined; 4) viability and effectiveness of prospective educational interventions employing the established concepts have not been pronounced.

English language learners' narratives informing the target questions

Another valuable perspective of how new learners' identities are formed, can be drawn from very informative, trustworthy and powerful insights provided by the second language learners themselves through thoughtful phenomenological observations

(Hoffman, 1989; Lvovich, 1997; Rodriguez, 1993).Here by second language learners I mean not classically perceived students attending ESL classes, but multilingual people (some of them can be ESL educators, like Lvovich, for example) who happen to be involved into the process of accommodation to the new culture and language. Since the second language learners are central subjects in the target research it will be justifiable to document their perceptions of the processes related to changes in their identity and employ these observations as first –hand evidence. Based on a concept of subjectivity, a less-celebrated partner of the objectivity (Jansen & Peshkin, 1992 cited in LeCompte), self-reflective analysts not only provide unique data participating in the process observed, but also identify the important stimuli. So unfairly neglected by the objectivists (Rand, 1957; Peikoff, 1991 cited in LeCompte), subjectivists (Husserl, 1969; Dilthey, 1988 cited in LeCompte) assert that self-reflection as method of scientific inquiry is no less "objective" than *objective* methods as such. Contradictory as it may sound, this claim stems from the dualistic nature of the eternal scientific debate on what is real, true, or rational (Jansen & Peshkin, 1992).

The afore-mentioned authors who presented their personal insights on how a person speaking one language plunges into the reality of another, living in the L2 environment, produce quite salient findings. For example, Hoffman (1989) testifies about the conflict within her personality she experienced upon immigrating to Canada, describing the deep frustration and feeling of lost identity. Bitterly she is asking herself if she could ever belong comfortably to any place, for her "sensibilities and opinions" seem to be always stuck somewhere betwixt and between" the place of her former home and a new place of living. Of particular interest to the present topic is another revelation she makes, on connection between language and her inner senses:

> The thought that there are parts of the language I'm missing can induce a small
>
> panic in me, as if such gaps were missing parts of the world in my mind--- as if the

totality of the world and mind were coeval with the totality of language. Or rather, as

if language were enormous, fine net in which reality is contained---- and if there are

holes in it , then a bit of reality can escape, cease to exist .(Hoffman, 1989, p.217)

In this case the author penetrates into the essence of language as the prism to see the

world through. Reciprocally, the world realia provide stimuli for creation of new images

for the individual linguistic expression. The highly emotional stance Hoffman (1989)

uses to share her discoveries of these moments with the reader makes this evidence

appeal to and give data for analysis more than any robustly calculated and confirmed

statistics.

One more example of learner's insight related to the research topic is expressed by

another multilingual person, Natasha Lvovich (1997) in her comments on deep

estrangement between learners on one side and SLA studies, scholarly achievements

and numerous theoretical speculations on the other. Although some of her phrases bear

a slight touch of declarativeness, for instance "Learning and using languages is a way

toward freedom" (Lvovich, 1997, p.XV.) it is hard not to agree with her.

Personal stance in research

On reviewing a vast body of literature on the topic discussed, it is necessary to

summarize how I position myself in relevance/relation to the topic and study with

respect to theories of SLA and intercultural education. I would position myself in several

roles entering the research procedures:

1) as a second language learner and multilingual person who has had a personal

continuous/ongoing experience of SL /AL learning and observed certain

personality changes related to the second (as well as third (Romanian), and

fourth (German)) language acquisition;

2) as an immigrant who shares the complexity and emotional intensity of challenges intercultural communication inevitably evokes in ESL learners; as a newcomer who struggles daily to establish her status in the new social, cultural and linguistic setting;

3) as a researcher who wishes to investigate the phenomena understudied and largely overlooked in SLA;

4) as a former psychology student who previously had made research on psychology of personality and who is sincerely curious about the identity issues and *language ego* paradigm in applied linguistics;

5) as an educator who wishes

   a) to connect personal experiences and observations obtained through

   b) EFL/ESL teaching practice with theoretical insights established in the field;

   c) to achieve better pedagogical understanding of how learners perceive the complex transformative processes within their personality;

   d) to determine how educators can utilize the awareness of such processes to facilitate ESL classroom practices;

Interestingly, all these roles do not come out of me as six different people looking at each other impatiently as if asking who the boss is: rather than feeling predominantly this or that way I'd describe them as my own identities existing in practically one large yet multiple domain of my "self". Do these identities actively interact somewhere within? Yes. Do they always agree? No. Do I always feel comfortable being torn apart by multiple directions they often lead me to? Far from being so, and yet I think that all these dimensions of my position towards the topic and other research in the field can stimulate application of multi-angled perspectives to explore the topic. Appearing in the roles of a teacher, learner, newcomer, and researcher I will be able to look into the

target phenomena from a particular angle. However, I am not going to paint myself in one color every time I choose the pertinent role in the study. Say, when interviewing learners I am not going to switch off a learner inside me, I'll perceive learners' stories comparing them with mine, treating learners as my colleagues, partners, and co-researchers. When narrating my personal ESL teaching experience relevant to the topic, I'll look at it also from an investigator's point of view, trying to associate it with the theoretical constructs acquired during my graduate studies. Whatever the angle I choose, it won't be a static or fixed attribution of one of the roles but an intersected perspective of an observer, participant, interpreter and reviewer. It is hard to set the borderlines between them. It is similar to the dialectical process between the reader and writer: while writing we are readers of our writing to the same extent as while we read we negotiate what and how to further write. In a word, I will shape, construct and negotiate my own understanding of the chosen inquiry just like my students negotiate and construct their identities in the ESL classrooms. To be honest, all of it gives me a wonderfully positive and satisfying feeling of equality with my students: equality in roles and in conditions. I often feel how they feel; they struggle to establish their identities almost in the same way I do it too. Hopefully, this complicity will not over shadow a researcher's "keen eye" in me. On the contrary, I deem this ethics of co-participation will advance the study to the reasonable results even better than just signing numerous consent forms. Recalling the initial premise of this paper, namely a focus on learner and making the learner a co-researcher in the study, I would assume that the ethics of equality in research representation will potentially increase trustworthiness of the target inquiry.

Chapter III

Methodology and research design

Hermeneutic qualitative inquiry: Participant – oriented research

From the discussion presented above it is clear that the phenomena related to identity dynamics are complicated, individually oriented, changing, controversial, hence hardly subjected to unambiguous definition or measurement. Notwithstanding they can be explored though, the first question coming to researcher's mind is *How?* What methodological frameworks and approaches can be chosen to investigate identity processes in SLA focusing on language ego paradigm? How can we find measurement tools to measure something that is intangible, evasive, subjectively perceived? Should this be measured at all? All these questions were going around in my mind while I was thinking over the methods to choose. Gradually, a more or less clear methodological paradigm started looming on the horizon: 1) if something can not be directly measured or identified it can described *as* and *through* people's perceptions; the more similar themes appear- the more reasonable assumptions can be made on the phenomena; 2) if something can not be measured directly it can be possibly measured or identified indirectly: through a certain related process, quality or phenomenon that is more tangible and observed, thus measured in some way. Language ego is too immaterial; however its influence can be described through transformative processes that take place during adaptation to and adoption of the new environment. Those can be described or observed in the sense of frequency of cases. All these speculations lead me to setting up a study design as a *qualitative inquiry* which will employ *Hermeneutic phenomenology* (van Manen, 2002) as the basic approach to guide the exploration.

Why phenomenological observations?

As a methodology aimed at recording human lived experiences "emphasizing phenomena precisely as they are lived" (Kirova, 2003, p.5), phenomenology prioritizes interpretation of such experiences taking shifting from scientific elucidations of the same phenomena to individual perceptions. To rationalize the use of phenomenology I would start by saying that it appeals to me by its attention to *situatedness* and a higher legitimacy of subjectivity, so to speak. It rests upon description (a way to get at the essences of the individual experience of the situation) and interpretation (a premise that there are no such things as un interpreted phenomena) (Kelly, 2000; van Manen; 1997; 2002). Typically, in human sciences scholars do not engage in research for the sake of research (van Manen, 1990). To investigate the meaning of teaching or learning as well as potential educational interventions to facilitate such is the main premise of pedagogy. As van Manen (1990) concludes, "… so when we raise questions, gather data, describe a phenomenon, and construct textual interpretations, we do so as researchers who stand in the world in a pedagogic way" (p.1). Consequently, a phenomenological research paradigm in teaching involves a direction from posing a question to investigation of the related lived experiences through recording and description, and finally data interpretation. Documentation of the lived experience in the variety of methods, including narratives, interview transcripts, and personal reflective memos places writing text in the centre of that research design. With that text in phenomenology acquires the value of the recorded fact similar to the numerical data registered in quantitative research. Texts become an essential part of phenomenological research where writing serves as an act of "making contact with the things of our world" (van Manen, 2001). With the utmost attention to the moment of each experience and its meaning for the author, texts appear as evidence to be

analyzed and explicated: "Texts that come to us from different traditions or conversational relations may be read as possible answers to questions" (van Manen, 1990, p.180). Specifically, *hermeneutic* phenomenological tradition (Gadamer, 1975; Heidegger, 1962) attends to a dialectical process between the reader and writer emphasizing not only text interpretation but reconstruction of the author's intended meaning. Thus, knowledge about the person who wrote the text acquires particular value (Hirsch, 1967). In the proposed research potential learners' perceptions of language learning related to the changes language ego supposedly accounts for will be recorded in the form of interview transcripts and students' narratives. Each story will be viewed as a unique and yet potentially repeatable experience. As a researcher applying a phenomenological approach I am willing to explore personal, irreplaceable events yet possibly significant to other learners who take a similar path. With that in mind I would assume that the significance of the potential pedagogical intervention can be also *differently* significant for different learners (van Manen, 1990). It leads to an understanding of pedagogy of sensitive action aimed at the individuality of each learner rather than a proposal of some general strategy working for all.

One more appealing aspect of phenomenology for the proposed design lies in its nature to study the essence of a phenomenon: "phenomenology is the study of essences; ….a philosophy which puts essences back into existence" (Merleau-Ponty, 1962, p. vii). By exploring lived experiences it attempts to link the facts to the feelings these facts evoke and then back to reality with a deeper understanding of the fact we start with. Often, we can be less successful in the sense that we end up with less or no understanding of the fact or event perceived which then stimulates us to repeat the inquiry, perhaps from a different angle. Paradoxically, this search for an answer seems to be even more valuable than the answer itself: through attempts to define the phenomenon we come to a deeper understanding of ourselves. This approach leaves

space for openness and variance. Openness, as "a sustainable motive of all qualitative

inquiry, [belongs] where no interpretation is ever complete, no explication is ever final,

no insight is beyond challenge" (van Manen, 2002, p.237). Dealing with phenomena like

language ego calls for the method that embodies attention to the moment of the

personal reflection and the meaning created by interpretation of such. I can not really

ask my participants: *Do you feel your language ego?* because in order to answer this

question we need to determine first what it really is. But what I *can* ask is "*Can you*

describe your language learning experiences?" And on receiving a text I will be able to

explore and interpret it. More so, by interpreting it I will be also interpreting my

understanding of personal language learning experience. That's why I find hermeneutic

phenomenology particularly applicable in the proposed study. I completely share Kelly's

(1989) reasoning on the choice of phenomenology when she states," Using

phenomenological method has required me to examine and get to know myself as well

as the women I interviewed. Phenomenology directs researcher to bracket out or

identify assumptions, biases, and personal situatedness in an attempt to increase

academic validity of the research as well as decrease any unintentional interference in

the interpretation process" (p.40). In a word, validity of data interpretation can be

increased by knowing who the interpreter is.

Why autoethnography?

Another important framework that I pursue in the proposed study is an

autoethnography (Denzin, & Lincoln, 2000; Richardson, 2000; Sparkes, 2000) based on

a participant-oriented research . Accepting the role of a *volunteer researcher* (Glesne,

2006) who initiates a more in-depth insight into the transformative processes ELLs may

experience in language learning, I was still a participant-researcher rather than just a

researcher studying others. Becoming an integral part of the group who shares its lived experiences, I defied establishing any hierarchal relationships or attaching any specific value to my personal observations. Instead, I wished to present the participants' reflections and those of my own as an integral whole to eliminate authoritativeness and power-related implications. What is more, autoethnography suggests the use of a formative stance most authentically reflecting the task posed in the study. By offering the personal accounts of language learning in the study a participant can present herself as part of a group or culture, describe the conflict of cultures within the self, attempt to see self as others might by analyzing differences from inside, and explain what it means to feel othered (Bennett, 2007).

Commenting more on the methodological choices I made, I can state that of three paradigms of qualitative inquiry, namely *ecological, interpretative, critical* (Schram, 2006) I intended to apply the interpretative one. It is the best way to attend to the multiple perspectives of the participants by actively engaging in multi-voiced constructions emerging in the study. It is through direct exposure to participants' experiences and manifold interactions that researchers can concentrate on and refine their interpretations (Creswell, 1998). As for the critical paradigm, it usually presupposes changes or reforms as a result of the research; however it is not my intent. At the first glance it may seem that I borrow the term *transformation* from the critical applied linguistics terminological paradigm. Nonetheless, critical pedagogy theorists are not the first ones to use it; or rather they do not use it in its initial meaning which is more inherent to psychological or philosophical insights. Most simplistically, *transformation* is a turn. Another dictionary meaning refers it to change either in appearance or character especially so that they are improved. Transformative processes related to identity imply any changes someone perceives in her sense of self on encountering the reality.

Not surprisingly, *transformation* in that meaning is widely employed by scholars in cross-cultural/multicultural education, psychology, philosophy. The use of this term then cannot be limited only to the SLA critical pedagogy tradition where it describes personal changes typically attached to socio-political agenda and relations of power. Therefore, to avoid any confusion it is necessary to clarify that term *transformation* would be usedin my study close to its understanding in intercultural education (Bennet, 1993; MacPherson, 2005; Paige, 1993). As Paige (1993) posed, "intercultural training is inherently "transformative", that is, intended to change learner cognition, behaviour, and affect…the ethical trainer is fully aware of this "person-transformation imperative" and able to help move learners through the challenges and difficulties in culture learning"(p.176). I think it is with this goal in mind that educators need to attend to the complexity of the intrapersonal shifts during that critical period.

The objective here is to gain access to language learners' lived experiences related to learning English and adapting to the Canadian culture. It is necessary to mention that it is not the personality conflict related to the *language ego* what will be put in the centre of investigation. Rather, a range of possible personal reactions that L1 incites in learners will be examined.

Research design

To remind the reader, the proposed study was guided by the following questions:

a) How does second language affect the sense of self of the learner in the specific milieu of the target language context?

b) Do ELL learners actually develop an "ego" corresponding to such an environment? To what extent do language learners retain their L1 identities

and develop L2 identities? Do they develop them at all? How do those two (three, more?) overlap?

These questions obviously called for the personal stories of the ELL learners who had been living through language learning experiences. The study of common experiences often suggests that "the best place to start is with one's own experience" (van Manen, 2000 p.49). As an immigrant to Canada and second language learner myself, planning an autoethnographic narrative as the principal material for the study, I thought that it would be also quite exciting to interview several EAL learners prior to my autoethnographic piece and then to cross examine the data.

Luckily, such an opportunity presented itself in March 2007 when I took the Qualitative Research Methods in Education course (EDUA 7840 A01) in my grad program. Since one of the major course assignments was to conduct a qualitative study, I decided to engage five EAL students graduated from the AEPUCE program at the ELC of University of Manitoba in 40-50 min, audio-taped, semi-structured individual interviews. Questions focused on students' experiences related to language learning and their reflections on how they explore and negotiate their identities in new social settings. On completion, the taped interviews were transcribed and interpreted. The participation in the project was voluntary: I invited 4 former ELL students from the ELC who agreed to participate in the study without much hesitation. They mentioned that they were attracted by the unusual topic of the study and by the chance to participate in the actual research. Shortly after that, quite unexpectedly, the question of looking for the fifth interviewee stood no longer because one of the four students who came to talk with me about the research brought up her friend, also a former AEPUCE ELC student, who volunteered to join the group.

To observe the formalities, the names of the participants were coded; no gender, age or ethnicity identified, and anything else that made it possible to distinguish

participants' actual identities was removed. Strict confidentiality was obtained by secure storage of transcripts under lock and key in the researcher's office. The study was conducted upon the receipt of the Education/Nursing Research Ethics Board's permission certificate.

In sum, the retrospective accounts of 5 adult ELL learners were planned to make one segment of research data, whereas my personal story framed into a reflective chaptered narrative under the name of *"Alice's Adventures in Wonder/Englishland and Through the Looking Glass",* was meant to constitute its second segment. I believed this research design would allow me to 1) elicit enough data to understand the target phenomena, 2) meet the criteria for time availability, 3) use different sources to triangulate data and thus augment the trustworthiness of the study. Upon collection, the data from both segments were to be cross examined for deeper understanding of the target phenomena. However, on the completion of the interviews, I decided to add one more narrative from one of the students interviewed because her reflective notes on the English language learning experiences written at the time of taking the AEPUCE courses seemed to be in tune with my autoethnographic piece. By doing so I gladly satisfied my inner wish to give as much equality of the representation to the language learners as possible. Now instead of just presenting my story standing aside from the students' interviews, I could put in another reflective narrative, this time, from the interview participant.

Chapter IV

Data collection: Interviews and narratives

Posing a task to explore self-perceptions of the learners in the new linguistic environment, specifically how it influences the development of their sense of self, I employed the conceptual framework considering language as the core component attributing to 1) self-identification, and the development of 2) sense of culture, and 3) social membership (See Table 2, Appendix 4).

Echoing Kouritzin's (1991) approach of acknowledging "the interdependence of language, identity, the construction of reality, and the individual" (p.19), and not forgetting along the way that language is also a social phenomenon, I wanted to explore the research questions through this multidimensional lens. The scholarly views describing the development of the *self* relating it to the linguistic development, both in L1 and L2, were put in the centre of my attention as insights allowing me to embrace the complexities of the topic. Of particular importance, psychoanalytic perspectives on the interconnection between the ego development and the symbolic of the first language became the perspective that most compliantly impelled me to inquire into the nature of the similar patterns evoked by the L2 acquisition in learner. In other words, psychoanalytic assumptions revealing the dominant role of L1 as agency denoting things (Lacan, 1991) in the ego development, presupposed a possibility of the application of a similar insight into the nature of ego development influenced by L2 learning. Bearing in mind a Lacan's concept of how signs of a language creates a certain systematic symbolic order, I tried to imagine how such symbolic order of L1 correlating with that of L2 , produces a developmental influence on the learner's sense of self. To define a symbolic order, Lacan posed that, "in a language the various signs-

the signifiers- take on their value from their relation to one another. That is the meaning of symbolic order. .. The sign is defined through other signs" (p.31). Applying this idea to the proposed research, I presumed that mastering a language, the learner is getting into the systematic and circular relationship of the particular signs of the new language seen as a self-contained dimension emerging from the reality sustainable due to the circularity of these signs. It looked as if through specific visual, phonetic, graphic, structural symbols any language contained, L2 were creating the self –world of the learner in a similar fashion that L1 were developing it. At the same time, the process of getting into the L1 and L2 seems to be quite different despite a number of similarities. Encountering with the new language, the learner's conscious is not *tabula rasa* anymore: the new linguistic reality might inevitably challenge the previously acquired one. To investigate the processes prospectively taking place in such a conflicting situation, I wanted to relate directly to the self-worlds of the learners, employing and amplifying the psychoanalytic approach accommodating it to the needs of the current study. Operating with the classical psychoanalytical terms in the classically defined circumspheres of their use, I wanted to analyze how L2 can influence the development of learner's *ego.*

The research questions related to the lived experiences of the language learners lead me to the study design involving 1) interviews of the five of my former students who took the language program I was teaching at; 2) narratives of the language learners, consisting of two stories: one of the interview participants (Esther) and that of my own. Initially, I thought that interviews would comprise the main corpus of research data since they would help the participants to recreate the events from their past and present experiences in a lively, spontaneous and relaxing way of doing so. From my teaching practice I knew that students from our program usually preferred to talk much more than to write. It was quite a common occasion when students actively discussed some essay

topics in class, giving rather substantial arguments, say preparing for the argument essay writing. However, when it came to the essay itself, their performance could be much less impressive. To give them a chance to feel less constrained by the formalities of the writing conventions, I chose the interviews. First, they are, "generally easier for the respondents, especially if what is sought is opinions and impressions" (Valenzuela, & Shrivastava, 2003) Moreover, as McNamara indicated (1999), "interviews are particularly useful for getting the story behind a participant's experiences. The interviewer can pursue in-depth information around the topic" (p.2).

Narrative was the second chosen genre of the data collection. In my view, it gave an opportunity of adding more authenticity and even intimacy to the participants' stories. It seemed as a more convenient format to construct the life story related to the target events when the author of the narrative is not limited in time and space as much as in the interview. Besides, not everybody may feel free enough to be quite open in the interview, especially in case when the interviewer is the former teacher. For me, a narrative was a format of the self- interview type of the quest, as I wanted to address the topics mentioned in the interviews. To elicit a narration embracing my lived experience related to the English learning, I asked myself almost the same questions as I did to the study participants.

To add, the learners' stories seemed quite reasonable because they might posses more clarification of the meaning the respondents would try to create in the interviews, and simultaneously they might reveal the aspects of the target phenomena which had not been directly touched upon in the interviews and/or narratives.

Interviews: Questions

As it has been already mentioned, all interviews took place at the University of Manitoba campus within a period from April to July 2007. All participants expressed a genuine interest in the topic discussed. 10 questions were offered to participants (see Appendix 2). I tried to ask the questions as they had been planned, however almost each interview had a certain deviation depending on how the participants were replying to the first questions from the list. My aim was to start from very general information about their language learning and let them feel free to touch upon any topics related to the target experience. Questions 3-5 specified more the focus of the participant's lived experiences, beginning with the most successful ones and ending with the less victorious moments in managing new linguistic environment or some specific tasks related to the English language acquisition. Questions 6-9 were planned to switch the focus of the interview from the language to the personal characteristics of the participants and then to how they view themselves in the new place using the new language. By doing so I tried to gradually scaffold the interview questions to the key study themes of how the participants perceive their *selves* using English. I thought that if I jumped from the very beginning to the target concepts' questions, the participants even might not understand what I would be asking them about. Thus, the preview type of more general questions were supposed to make the participants feel more comfortable, address them to their personal experiences and only then challenge them by relating to their sense of self before and after studying and using English.

Introduction of interview participants

Sarah: A sparkling character

Sarah was one of the first responders who enthusiastically agreed to participate in the research. Her reaction was very positive as she said she was curious about being interviewed in English. She came from Teheran, Iran from a well-to do family and at first was not interested much in AEPUCE program. By all accounts she was pushed by her parents to study overseas: first the language, next …something else as she could never definitely specify what academic area she was going to pursue a university degree in. As she described herself, *"Before I came here, you know, I was just a party girl, not serious at all "*(Transcript I, page 9, lines 26-27). Notwithstanding her unwillingness to profoundly study Academic Writing, Sarah surprisingly appeared to be an inquisitive learner, ready to discuss new things and actively engaged in classroom practice. She impressed me as a talkative, witty, sociable, responsive person who gradually got quite interested in studies and her personal academic achievements. I remember how genuinely nervous she was when we started a research paper process and how happy to receive a comparatively high final mark for the course. In a word, I was very glad to have Sarah's agreement to participate in the research as her personal experience of language learning seemed quite meaningful.

During the interview Sarah impressed me as a supportive and responsive participant. She was genuinely communicating what she thought was relevant and important. I even think she belongs to that type of people who plunges into a challenge not yet knowing what to do and how, but then in the midst of that experience they really find the core of it. Her spontaneity compensated the confusion about the topic when we started the interview. Sarah was the first to mention the most important themes relevant to the study. Her experience of a newcomer who at first was curious of but completely

upset by the new setting on arrival demonstrated the pattern when positive perceptions of the cultural environment gradually replaced the initial negativity and alienation, "*It's like you go to the store and you can not even say what you want, or when they answer you do not understand what they say. It was terrible. There were so many times when I wanted to give it up*" (Transcript I, page 5, lines 12-15). Sarah was also the first one to openly state that "*a new language made a different person from me*" (Transcript, I, page 10, lines 11-12). It was clear that language learning played a big role in her personal growth. I felt she would never be just a party girl anymore.

Taewoo Kim: An analytical explorer

Taewoo Kim was my second participant. He came from South Korea, a mature, quiet, serious young man. I always liked the way he attended to the classroom discussions and how politely he talked to teachers and classmates. A responsive and responsible student, Taewoo struggled with the clarity of writing expression. His ideas ever complicated and deep, seemed to be too complex for the limitations of a rigid and clear-cut English formal writing style. It's better to say we struggled together: Taewoo and me. He - because the sentences he created in essays were overloaded with the profound sense and seemed to break under its weight, me – because I was trying hard to get through that complexity and reconstruct the awkward dinosaurs-of-the sentences Taewoo so laboriously made. Nonetheless, I loved to work with him. I cherished his attention and a sincere wish to improve. I celebrated his first strong critical summary as if it were mine, wishing to say: *We did it!* I wrote my rejoicing comments on his paper and then later in the class I watched how slowly (not to spoil the moment) he was reading that. I saw a shadow of mixed feelings over his face: it was a moment of the reward after a hard work. I find such moments the most precious in teaching. The

moments when teacher and learner share the joy of the much-awaited result after the long journey of ups and downs they took together. I am so grateful Taewoo gave me these moments. When I was designing the current study I thought about him as one of the most desired participants. Fortunately, he willingly agreed. He expressed some concerns though, saying he had never done something like that before; however on hearing from me that there could be no right or wrong answers, he said it would be another page in his Canadian life experience. Throughout the interview he would switch the pace of his speech several times, starting slowly, carefully choosing words and watching grammar and then gradually talking faster, even interrupting me as if he were afraid of forgetting something important. When he spoke slowly, making long pauses I was thinking it was too hard for him, or he was not prepared to speak on that topic. But I understood why it was happening when he mentioned, that *if I hear one word, I try to think in my own language, as I want to express it first I think in my own language, and I translate it first* (Transcript II, page 8, lines 11-16)., I noticed that Taewoo appeared to be more analytical than Sarah who was more spontaneous and instinctive, and his revelations regarding language learning added another substantial dimension to pursuits of the current study.

Xiaoran Li: An uncompromising fighter

My third participant was Xiaoran Li, also a former AEPUCE student, a very sophisticated girl from China. Xiaoran Li joined my Writing class in 2006 Fall session a week later after the program began as she was transferred from Shanghai university after a year of studies at the Faculty of Agriculture. At the U of M she also planned to study Food science. She always looked very attractive like a princess from a classical Beijing opera. Every time I saw her I wished she was wearing an elegant silk *Qipao*

instead of jeans and a blouse. Despite her gentle, almost fairy- like looks, Xiaoran Li had a strong, fervent and self-assured personality. Having her own opinion on every point, she was ready to express it at any time without fears, which was not typical of many Chinese female students. She started our program without much enthusiasm; however after the midterm break she seemed wakening up by showing more interest in what we did in class. We established a good relationship, and I was certainly pleased that Xiaoran Li agreed to take part in the research. Knowing how independent and sometimes sharp her opinions might be, I was anticipating many interesting and even surprising things from that interview. I must say I was not mistaken. As I said before Xiaoran Li's personality paradoxically represented a combination of fragile pretty Chinese girl and an imposing, strong, almost a "Western –type -of -a woman" assertive person. Throughout the interview she would first think a little and then answer as if asking herself something like "*What do I think about that? Do I really think so?"* before she spoke. The third participant to join the study --- and again- a strong individuality with a genuine responsibility to contribute some important insight... Xiaoran Li talked much about her perceptions of Canadian culture and language learning. Mostly it was associated with rather negative feelings. It was clear she did not accept that cultural paradigm completely. She was more willing to criticize the cultural habits of the native speakers blaming them for non- appreciation of the benefits they had an easy access to. Seemed "angrier" than the other participants, Xiaoran Li nevertheless articulated a wonderfully honest as well as diverse explanation of how she perceived the new setting and herself in it. I appreciated her sincerity. I thought that her straightforwardness strongly complemented to such trustworthy responses.

Lily: A happy admirer of the host culture

Lily is a pretty graceful Chinese girl with a firm yet friendly look, soft brown eyes, always ready to smile. At the time she was my student she was wearing metal-framed glasses that made her face look more serious than it really was. I couldn't help thinking that she might have been using these solid glasses to hide her gregarious nature and readiness to burst into laughter no matter what. And it would not be that light-minded, thoughtless giggle but sort of the blissfully expressed laughter to celebrate the joy of the moment. As she described herself in the interview: *"I am a sensitive person, I always laugh a lot and I always like crying.. "* (Transcript III, page 4, Lines 9 -10). Rather outgoing and sometimes even loud Lily can stay very quiet in class, though, but I noticed how genuinely attached she had always been to whatever was said or discussed. She was never unhappy about or negligent to the assignments required in the course. Reasonably ambitious, she would yet be very critical to her own performance, showing her sincere disappointment with the job she had done if it were rated lower than her expectations. Noticeably, Lily chose a very unusual topic for her final research paper assignment – it was about Marie Antoinette and her role in the outburst of the French Revolution. Evidently, possessing a strong extroverted personality allowing much space for reflective moments, Lily was attracted to the controversial characters in the world history. Lily would never hesitate long before giving an answer to any of my questions. It was not that she was too self- confident but as if she really respected her opinion and even more - a chance to voice it. Later on in her interview she would mention that she liked to participate in discussions and to argue on appealing topics. She would keep on mentioning how comfortable she felt in the Canadian environment. She seemed to be always very open to trying different strategies of improving her English. Lily's keen interest in language learning and much

aspiration for perfection made her a very engaged learner as well as research participant.

Esther: A passionate seeker of her unlimited self

Esther was the fifth participant volunteered for the research. I met her at the graduation ceremony when she completed Level 4 of the IAEP (Intensive Academic English Program) at the English Language Centre. She was chosen to be a speaker as the best student from that program level. Esther looked gorgeously in her lovely dress, high heels and hair neatly done. Her big brown sparkling eyes were full of passion and charming excitement while she was sharing her impressions on the program finished. One of her Level 4 instructors mentioned that Ester's talents of self-expression were so astonishing that it was hard to believe she almost didn't speak English when she started the program four months ago. From the first classes I realized how mature she was and at the same time how childishly vulnerable! Preparing herself for the grad program at the U of M, Esther wanted to jump from the intermediate level of language proficiency to the much-advanced one as one of her main personality traits was a striving for perfection. However, not for the sake of perfectionism per se, but for the fear of feeling diminished, rejected and isolated. Lively, passionate and sociable, she was nearly in tears confessing that "*Here I don't want to talk to people, because I can't. I'm afraid of being laughed at, 'cause I actually **was** laughed at.*" Very fragile by looks and quite strong inside, Ester appeared to be extremely sensitive to any manifestation of unfriendliness or criticism regarding her English performance. Open-hearted and highly emotionally charged she would be quick to tears when she spoke about her negative experiences related to language learning. Quite a successful, energetic independent business-woman in Brazil, she suddenly felt somewhat unwanted and unaccepted in the

new country. Her first sincere baby steps towards the host culture through the language and familial contacts with the relatives living in Canada, made her feel nothing but trapped in cultural discrepancies and illogicalities of that new life. Her ambitious plans to obtain a Master's degree in Canada were accompanied by a painful fear of the inadequacy of her linguistic and identity-search-related adjustments for acceptance in the new environment. Paradoxically, Esther became a student who was both attracted to her situation by my compassion and repressed by the requirements of the formally framed style of academic writing I taught in my course. She obviously enjoyed class discussions, but a lack of vocabulary and a recognized fashion of self- expression acceptable for the current classroom setting made her emotions running ahead of the English words and she felt embarrassed, switched off, and therefore desperate. Particularly it referred to writing. I will always remember her panicking request to have an appointment with me to discuss the problems she encountered while performing the writing course assignments. I invited her to my office where she sincerely confessed: *"Almost always I have been a confident writer. I am not anymore now. I feel like I hate writing. Sometimes I feel like I hate you because you put me in the limits I can't jump over. Oftentimes, I can't even make a sentence on paper, because I'm afraid it is not the right style, it is not academic. I like to be perfect in everything I do-now I see that I can't do this because I know I am not perfect anymore."* The confession of that kind proved that Esther was suffering her identity crisis, almost like a rejected teenager whose actions were not approved by strict parents. Her passionate desire to succeed ran against the limitations the new environment put to the mode of her self-expression. As a result, she felt really torn apart between her genuine longing for being accepted and understood in the new culture and her zealous need to remain herself without sacrifices such acceptance might involve. I asked her to talk it out as much as possible because I knew she needed that outburst of the negative emotions strangling

her from inside and preventing her from any further studies. Moreover, her emotions and tribulations were quite familiar to me because I was (and obviously will always be) in her shoes as a second language learner. I told her that I was neither surprised nor discontented with her honest confessions. I promised to her that I would give her as much time as I could to let her get adjusted to the high demands of the academic writing conventions. I assured her that her problems were very common and there was nothing wrong in how she felt; on the contrary, all the learners had to experience that harsh period of breaking their conceptions of how they should communicate their ideas in a linguistically new academic environment. After some time, when Esther was smiling through her bitter tears, I felt much relieved. I suggested to her starting a reflective journal where she could reveal her understanding of the situation she was passing through. Firstly, this journal could serve as a writing practice in English, secondly; it would help her to look at the difficulties of the situation from the perspective of a participant and observer. I also encouraged her to record not only hard events of negative feelings but positive moments as well to add more width to the view of the situation. Finally, I suggested that I would not mark a few of Esther's currently coming assignments for her to feel less stressed over a potentiality of getting a low mark. Esther happily agreed and left my office with an evident ray of hope. Since then Esther tried hard to improve her writing style. Her success did not come quick, though. Nonetheless, with every new assignment she felt more confident sounding more logical, convincing, and, yes, academic. Her usual informal emotional phrases and repetitions in paragraphs were gradually replaced by much better organized sentences, where she tried to express herself more succinctly. Her confession that, "*When I write like you say it's not me anymore! I can not express myself in such limited rules!*" was no longer valid as she was learning how to remain herself being quite laconic and specific without adding redundant elements . Her research paper was even more concise than I probably had

expected it to be and when I told her about that she was really happy to know how academic she sounded! As an observer of her own language learning, Esther finally came to a very precious conclusion that no matter how dramatic the limitations she experienced might be, they could help her discover a new *herself in* the context of such a challenge. By her account, that experience helped her to grow personally.

Overall, the obvious diversity of individual characters the participants represented sounded very promising to me as I wished to explore the inner processes transpiring in learners' across cultures *and* personalities. It became quite exciting to investigate how so different people as Taewoo, Sarah, Esther, Lily, Xiaoran Li would tell me about their language learning experiences. I was wondering what would be in common for these different personalities and what would become quite divergent in their perceptions of themselves utilising English. I was eagerly anticipating the stories of the participants portraying themselves in a new circumstance of their lives.

Chapter V

Findings and Interpretations:

Learners' experiences on plunging into English

Interviews: Discussion

It was quite hard for me to predict how the participants' responses might interweave with the views previously drawn by me from the literature on the research pertinent to the study. It was also interesting to see if they resonate with the themes of my experience as a second language learner and teacher. As it could be often the case, the learners' testimonies, largely derived from the core of their personal perceptions of their language–related encounters could have little in common with the theoretical depth and complexity of how the scholars view that. Or it could be the opposite case—the expected patterns of the language development so immensely described in the literature might lack the authentic evidence the learners might share in the corpora of the research data. In a word, it was very exciting to hypothesize over the possible answers. I have to gladly admit that my excitement was soon generously repaid.

As I was listening to the learners' stories about their English learning, I was impressed by the genuine sincerity they had been delivered to me with. The lively interest of the students combined with the active involvement in the attempts to analyze their experiences created the main emotional background for that part of the study. It looked as if the learners were trying not only to recollect the most significant events of their language learning describing how they started, persevered and finally acquired a certain level of English, but as if they were asking themselves, "so what? What did it give to me, how did it change my perception of myself in the new linguistic context?" Looking through the interview transcripts, I can see the following distinctly emerging themes:

1) Theme one: Patterns of personal response to the new social and linguistic setting.

2) Theme two**:** Perceptions of culture of the target language

3) Theme three: Impact of language learning on perceptions of *self:* How do participants view themselves speaking L1 and L2?

4) Theme four: Impact of language learning on perceptions of general personality development

Before providing data analysis I would like to clarify my personal stance in how I see this process. I would not separate the analytical procedures and interpretative insights. I am on the same page with Kelly (2000) who poses," I have no clear boundary between the "data analysis" and the "data interpretation". As I discuss each theme identified in the analysis, my discussion takes on the role of interpretation as well. For what is -- is" (p.76). Glesne (2006) also emphasizes that what one did in data analysis was telling stories, "Struck by stories, you tell them and repeat them" (p.152). To me researcher does not only repeat them but tells them based on how she sees them. That's what I view as interpretation: the story rendered by the researcher is no longer the participant's story; it's the story of both, researcher and participant. The interviews exposed experiences of five EAL learners, and hopefully, following Kelly's (2000) stance, I would be as honest with my interpretations of their stories as they were honest sharing them with me.

Theme One

Patterns of personal response to the new social and linguistic setting.

As MacPherson (2005) concludes, the learner's struggle to adapt may involve various patterns of behavior including *resistance, assimilation, marginality,*

semilinguism, bicultural accommodation and intercultural creativity (Bennet, 1986; 1993; Berry, 1980; Birman, 1994; Romaine, 1994; 2000, cited in MacPherson). These patterns transpire as a result of relationship between learner's social world (Hawkins, 2005) and the outer world. The socially situated identities have to fuse their sociocultural experiences into interaction where the flow of language, participation and negotiation (Hawkins, 2005) are shaped under the influence of their experiences and those of the interlocutors (Bernstein, 1990; Edwards & Potter, 1992; Fairclough, 1992; cited in Hawkins, 2005; Norton, 2005). All five interviewees clearly demonstrated different patterns of their reactions to the new environment, namely a Canadian university setting. Looking at the data, I would identify that all students' responses demonstrate the pattern of *bicultural accommodation.* At the same time Esther and Xioran Li reacted to the new environment quite negatively, obviously exemplifying *resistance.* To add, Taewoo's, Sarah's and Lily's perceptions can also fall into the pattern of *intercultural creativity.*

By *bicultural accommodation* MacPherson (2005) understands such a choice when the native and contact languages and identities are kept separate and distinct and when learners take on a pragmatic and instrumental orientation to language. Sarah: *"Here, we have to speak English to teachers; they don't understand your first language. You have to explain everything in English. You are asking questions in English, answer in English* (Transcript I, page 13, lines 12-15). Taewoo*:" If I know how to use English, I can go web surfing easily and I can travel all over the world 'cause English is the most common language in the world. And also my family is getting immigration; I need to speak English well* (Trancsript II, page 5, lines 5-10).

And Xiaoran Li:

> *I think that English… you know sometimes, we use a language as a*
>
> *communication tool, but you know if you want to make friends you*

want to know more, not only language, you need to know the culture, that

country's history, and then you can talk to them. So I think English… (a long

pause, thinking)…like now I am in the Faculty of Agriculture, Agriculture and

*Food science and there are so-ooo (puts stress on **so**) many native speakers,*

and you make friends, you know (Transcript III, page 5, line 28; page 6 lines 7-

14).

Lily is even more pragmatic on the role of English:

From the very beginning I should say it was a kind of tool, I had to learn it

because I had to find a good job. (Transcript III, page 1, lines 25-27). She

emphasizes that she **had** to learn it to achieve certain personal goals.

Unlike the other participants, Esther did not speak English at all before she came to

Canada. She tried to find motivation to learn English upon arrival to Canada as she

accompanied her husband who received a grant for studies in the Canadian

University. As she said:

When I came here I just thought "Oh, I am going to have my husband beside

because he will take a Master's program. Then in future maybe I can take a

Master's program because I already have a degree in food Engineering. But first I

have to learn English. I need to think about something that brings me motivation

to study English. But later I realized that the main reason to learn English was a

need of communicating with people. …I could not live without communication.

*And this point **was** and **is** my motivation to study English.* (Transcript V, p.2, lines

7-16, p.3, lines 3-6). And later, *I needed to express myself regarding feelings and*

thought. (Transcript V, p. 3, line 9). These quotes prove that instrumental view of

language is common to all five participants. At the same time the participants clearly

indicate how they separate their languages and cultures along the way of their studies

in Canada. To illustrate, Taewoo indicates that he keeps his L1 system in mind even

when he speaks English. Although he has observed some new qualities in how he communicates meaning in both languages, he would distinctly separate his Korean and English identities:

> *…in the University office there is a Korean supervisor, when I try to speak Korean*
>
> *to her or speak English to her, our relationship are different. When I speak*
>
> *English I can think she is my friend or we could be more friendly, there is no…*
>
> *there is no expression that shows my responsibility to her. As I speak Korean,*
>
> *I can need …. be more.. I try to be polite* (Transcript II, page 10, lines 6-12).

In the pattern of *intercultural creativity* (Bennet, 1986; 1993; MacPhesron, 2005) learners not only use language as a tool to serve their goals, but construct a positive schemata of their integration into the host culture, characterized by "greater freedom, satisfaction , and lifestyle options" (MacPherson, 2005, p.7). Sarah, Taewoo, and Lily are three participants who obviously show positive attitudes towards their intercultural experience, focusing on the benefits of mingling into new environment no matter how challenging it might happen to be. The two other participants, Xiaoran Li and Esther, appear to be most critical to the host culture, openly "rejecting the incoming language and culture" (MacPherson, 2005). They do not seem to overcome completely the cross-cultural differences that to much extent demand tolerance to the ambiguity of new context and even sacrificing part of the habitual communicative framework accepted as a given at home. To be more exact, despite Xiaoran Li accepts the benefits of the language learning and foreign educational experience, further on she describes that circumstance quite skeptically, although she starts positively : *"…language learning makes an unforgettable experience to everyone, 'cause you are not going learning only a communication tool* " (Transcript IV, page 22, lines15-17), genuinely admiring language learning:

> *I love it. Actually I love every language, not only English. If you learn the*

language and you can read books. And sometimes you will think Oh, it's beautiful in its language character, you find the language is beautiful no matter if it's English, or Chinese , Korean, Japanese and you think it's a beautiful language. And you think Oh!... it's another view of the world …(Transcript IV, page 16, lines 28-29; page 17, lines 8-12).

On the other hand, so many times she mentions how the new setting made her angry, ambitious, and uncomfortable,*:" I start feel ambitious and very- very angry. Sometimes very angry. I don't like it that way… (*Transcript IV, page 19, lines 13-15). And she even speaks of that rejection directly. When I asked her if she had ever experienced any resistance to the different culture or using its language, she responded unhesitatingly: (*smiling and almost whispering*) *Of course!* "(Transcript IV, page 17, lines 14-16).

"*...they would say "Pardon me?, Pardon me? Pardon me?" Yeah, and when the first thing they start saying "Pardon me?" I got nervous, I think Oh, my God, they do not know what I am talking about! (bitterly laughs) And I have to express it again (puts stress on again) and they say "Pardon me?" Ohhh! …. I don't know…..*(Transcript IV, p.7, lines 21-26*). Actually when I hear "Pardon me? I would say, OK, … forgive me, forget me, I don't want to say it anymore. I feel upset, yes, sometimes I am upset , yeahh* (Transcript IV, p. 8, lines 8-9). "*… they would say, come on you stay here and you should know English! (Puts much emotion in that phrase).T.: Do they say like that?X.: No, but the eyes, their eyes-- they say for it, yeah, when you speak you can see the eyes, and you know what they are thinking and often you feel like "Come on!", but you are nervous, and it's very unpleasant. But you have to talk to them, if you don't, talking about telling that you are not a native speaker, sometimes, they just say you have to use it.* (Transcript IV, p.8, lines 15-23). Later on she criticizes the behavioral patterns she observes in her classmates: *I just want to give examples. If I want to do the presentation, and a there's some guy, who did not want to deal with it, and he stayed*

there and said nothing. I would be very- very angry at that moment. … I met many guys

like that, mostly native speakers, and I know they are not like Chinese, because

Chinese are very hard working. And these guys, they are not. They are lazy. I mean if

you don't want to do anything why you stay there and people are looking at you.

T.: Does it refer to the team work?

X.: No matter teamwork it's often in lab, in lecture. I start feel ambitious and very- very

angry. Sometimes very angry. I don't like it that way…

T.: Do you think it relates mostly to the English speaking environment?

X.: Yes, even if they say "it does not matter, it doesn't' matter". Well, how I think it

doesn't matter?(Transcript IV, p. 9, lines 7-19).

Obviously, the anger Xiaoran Li experiences is rooted in her rejection of the situations

associated with the incoming cross-cultural discrepancies. It is an open secret that for

Chinese students it is quite traumatic to stand in front of class not knowing what to say

due to "the concept of "face" or importance of having status in front of others" (Kennedy,

2002). She can not accept the possibility of behaving like that blaming her Canadian

classmate for his laziness. Quite distinctly she voices her assumptions that the guy

behaves like that because he is not Chinese, implying that in the host culture such

behaviour is not even questioned.

Another example of highly critical comprehension of the host culture leading to

resistance is offered by Esther's experience. Despite how much inspired she was by the

fact that her husband pursued his graduate studies in Canada, it could not help her from

feeling outcast: *I couldn't speak **a n y t h i n g**. Therefore, I was living in my own world*

because I could see my husband, my sister-in-law and everybody around me speaking

English and I couldn't understand and I couldn't speak…And I was alone like…..And I

asked to myself what am I doing here? Why I left my job, why I left my parents, why I

did these things to be? (Transcript V, p.5, lines 17-22). It was difficult for Esther to feel

connected because she lacked the most important tool to get in touch with people, so she started learning English enthusiastically. However, her enthusiasm ran against misunderstanding on the part of hosts what created a strong negative schemata in her mind: the local people, their language, their cultural norms are not only very different from those at home, but also quite offensive: …*this new situation in my life brings me this challenge to have to speak another language. It's a challenge because day by day I need to … like … conquer something new. For example, when I started to speak little words many people laugh at me and it was hard to me. I did not believe I could speak clearer than that.* (Transcript V, p.3, lines 21-25). The more Esther tries to get closer the more upset she seems to be*: when I saw people saying that I was wrong I got very upset. Sometimes I thought I **can't** do this anymore. It is something beyond words….it is something that goes to your personality and makes you feel sad.* (Transcript V. p. 4, lines 3-5). She openly mentions how failing her attempts to adapt to the challenges of the circumstance appeared to be: . *And I had I hard time to adapt myself to the Canadian's ways to handle with something… Sometimes when I pronounced a word in the wrong way, my sister-in-law husband corrected me. I did not like that. In my point of view he was rude doing that. I know he was trying to help me but I could not see like that. I think I was so sensible with many new situations that I could not accept such correction. Plus, Canadian has a different way to speak and I could not agree with that way. I was compared to Brazilian's…people…especially myself. In short, I was sad every time when he did that.* (Transcript V, p.7, lines 8-15). Resonating with Xiaoran Li's views on the host behavioral norms, Esther's criticism on her relative's manners to pull her English up indicates her utmost rejection of the offered help. Felt ridiculed and "beaten" for her poor language competence, Esther chooses to take a step back, to hide from the painful realty, resisting to its diminishing impact on her personality: *If I do not feel confident to speak I prefer to be alone. If I behave like this I can avoid frustration. I*

do not expose myself to painful situations (Transcript V, p.9, lines, 6-8). Quite

oppositely, Sarah, Taewoo and Lily make it clear that their language related

experiences are mostly positive despite significant challenges.

In a word, the emotional palette of personal involvement in the new linguistic setting

range quite widely across participants, embracing such responses as optimistic

exploration, compliant acceptance as well as dramatic and startlingly uncompromising

denial of the patterns observed during the studies in Canada. Moreover, one participant

may demonstrate all reactions one by one, usually stemming from curiosity towards new

language and even passion for its learning, which may not necessarily end happily

(Xioran Li, Esther). Not surprisingly, Balint (1956) justifiably poses that human is an

intimate mixture of extremes, depending on others and him, swinging between complete

self- reliance to "paralyzing fear" due to diverse conditions of growing up.

Theme two

Perceptions of culture of the target language

The polymorphous nature of language as a means of penetration into a new culture

presupposes no rigorous separation of the themes emerged in the interviews. Quite

obviously, the patterns of personal response to the new environment presented above

closely relate to the perceptions of the target culture. Yet it seems necessary to discern

the latter as a relatively independent theme trying to specify how such patterns are

happening. This theme includes how learners perceive the surrounding culture using

English: presumably, the more they use the target language the more impressions of

culture it is associated with they can get.

Here participants can be divided into two groups, Group 1 (Lily, Taewoo, Sarah)

who demonstrate complete acceptance and approval of values of the host culture, and

Group 2 (Xioran Li and Esther) who deny and reject the patterns observed. In Group 1,

Lily vocalizes most positive impressions of Canadian environment: *Actually, I really like the Canadian environment because this environment is very open-- you can express yourself very directly, so I can do it because I believe every people will respect me. Now I can talk [about] my experience in the university that I got not a very high mark. I think it can not be embarrassing I can just talk about myself and I think other people will respect me. And Canadians like that kind of expression, I believe.* (Transcript III, p. 13, lines 3-11). Comparing the educational setting in China and Canada, Lily emphasizes how free she feels in the Canadian university. When asked about if she felt the same at home, she says: *Actually no. I talk like this only with very close friends. T.: You can not openly discuss your experiences? L.: No (in a very quiet voice)* (Transcript III, p.13, lines 12-16). She also describes a more specific situation to illustrate her understanding of the difference between the two settings: *For example, maybe it's off the topic, but I just want to give one example. In Canada, with bus (waiting for the bus, O.C.) I can sit anywhere like on the grass, or anywhere, you can see students in the university they can sit anywhere they want. But in China it's not like that. In China students always sit in good gesture. In school we have to sit like this (shows the position where arms are put directly on the table).*

T.: All the time?

L..: Yeah, yeah!!! (Transcript III, p.13, lines 16-25).

Lily goes even further, openly showing her admiration of the Canadian environment. When asked if she would behave differently coming back to China, she says: *Yeah-h, obviously I think it's a tough question because I compare these two different environments and I realize which one is better for my personality. Maybe some people like the Chinese culture, but I prefer this kind of Canadian environment, where my personality can go open. But I think when back to China .. I… I … want to keep my personality. I want to keep open. But I still will have to follow a little bit Chinese culture*

because I must hang with people and going back to Chinese culture people have to get used to different culture. I think this is a principle in the nature (laughs) (Transcript II, p.14, lines 8-19). The last comment seems to indicate that it is inherent in people to behave in the group conforming to the rules of the group. So, despite her inclination to act differently, like a Canadian, back home, she will certainly keep from that as she does not want to stand out.   When talking about the cultural environment, Sarah mentions how important and at the same time natural for her is picking up the ways the target culture offers*: .: I think, well, it's a funny point, but I think when I learn a new language, I learn a new culture too, so, in my first language I am the person of that culture. And when I use another language I am a person of that culture as you speak with that people. …..* (a pause*) It' s like the language itself, everything is different, everything is new...And when* (a pause). *I just think (makes a stress on that),because when you have to communicate with the people in that language you have to adopting everything. As it's not only about the language, it's about everything and that makes you a new person You have to behave like them. So, and I guess gradually you pick their way, and everything.*(Transcript I, p.12, lines 7-18). When asked if it were like copying the others, she says: *.: No, I don't copy, it's just… patterns, I don't even feel it. It happens gradually....Unconsciously, I guess, happens* (Transcript I, p.12, lines 21-23). I think Sarah's comment on how unconsciously she adopts the patterns observed in the target cultural environment is an important evidence from her life experience- it shows that the language practice not only links learners to the culture of the language but influences behaviors that make such communication more natural and comfortable. Adequate to the comfort zone of learner's inner sense of self, which largely depends on how others refer to her, or to much degree, assess her level of adequacy. It resonates with Lily's comparison of her behavior in China and Canada, when she has to keep to the norms and patterns expected by the group.

Taewoo also speaks about that feeling of being split between the two cultural domains, in his case those of Korean and Canadian: *Sometimes I am confused. It's a dilemma. Since… I am always thinking about it whether my behavior is right or wrong. And it's depends on where I am located. And even though I speak to native speaker, …, if I have a Korean friend or some Koreans, I don't know,--- I can be different* (Transcript II, p.12, lines 23-26, p.13, lines 3-5). Taewoo also perceives Canadian culture as more individualistic compared to Korean: *When I was in Korea I can think more about a group,…I think of people ,… I like to be involved in group more than when I am in Canada. In Canada I likely to be more involved in personal, in private.. (Looking for words..)*

T.: More on your own?

TK.: Yes, more independent. (Transcript II, p.14, lines 20-25). There is also a comment very similar to Sarah's perception of unconscious imitation of the patterns learners encounter with. When Taewoo describes his observations on how people act in different settings, he mentions: *I have to consider like if I am with some Koreans…they can be in two groups and one is .. has experience in Korean culture, and another group is… just only stays in Korea, I have to think about how …. how I can behave to them, group 1 and group 2..(* Transcript II, p.15, lines 22-27). By all accounts, Taewoo identifies differences in behavioral patterns of Koreans when they communicate at home, and here, in Canada. Further he adds: *Yeah, even though… even if I can keep my behavior like that in my own language as I contact people, meet some people and I see how they act and behave even if I don't want that ……in my conscience, I can change even though I don't know how and what I am doing. Suddenly I notice I can be changed* (Transcript, p.16, lines 17-22).

However, Taewoo seems to accept that sensation of being split between the two mental and behavioral cultural paradigms, and quite harmoniously. *TK.: Yes, of course. In my country's environment I feel like be more in a group. In Canada I am more independent.*
T.: Do you feel comfortable about that?
TK.: Yes, I feel comfortable about both: to act in one way in my country and to be different here. (Transcript II, p.15, lines 11-15).

Another characteristic that Taewoo associates with the target culture is equality. As he says, here, in Canada, he feels more *equal* to the people who he communicates with: *…as I speak English, I treat people equally .. More. than when I speak Korean. …The same reason is for teacher. The relationship between the teacher and me is different: in Korean I try to never call a teacher's name and in English I always call teacher's name* (Transcript II, p.11, lines 7-11). As Taewoo explains, Korean has specific grammatical forms to address to older people or those of any other seniority, say teachers. Taewoo says that he works as a part-time cashier at the grocery store here in Canada, and he never thinks of ….*how to be polite to customers as I treat them equally…(Transcript II, p.11, lines 3-4).* It may sound out of place to the western sensibility, but by treating his customers more equally he implies apparently that English as a language with no forms to differentiate interlocutor by seniority, allows him not to discern peoples' statuses, particularly in such commonplace circumstance as shopping.

To summarize, this group of participants characterizes Canadian cultural environment as more equal and more individual-oriented than their home cultures more dependent on the opinions and interests of the group. A perception of such a spontaneous, almost unconscious switch to the patterns observed is expressed by the two participants. Group 2, which includes Xiaoran Li and Esther, describe their perceptions of the host culture in less elated colors. Esther depicts her new environment quite dramatically: *The language, food, weather, people, scenario, clothes are different.*

Even though I do not change my inside….there is no way to have the same outside. My concern is to avoid the outside to change my inside. When I see some Brazilian speaking in English they sound like "artificial". I think they absorbed something more than language…maybe the culture (Transcript V, p.12, lines 21-25). She adds, *Yeah, it is not natural…they do not look Brazilian anymore…I do not know…it is strange to me.*(Transcript V, p.13, lines 2-3). Trying to understand what lies behind Esther's disapproval of the things she deals with in a new place, I think that it is her inability to freely communicate in English. The constraints her language command puts on her, obviously create a negatively perceived circumstance that provokes such a hard feeling. I guess negativity of the situation when a linguistic barrier cuts her off the target culture, is transferred by Esther to the culture itself. It proves how language opens or shuts the door to the culture it represents depending on how well learner can use it. As a result, Esther does not feel any connections with the host environment:*… In Brazil I always keep speaking, but now I have to stay quite. Many times here I don't want to see people; I don't want to talk with them* (Transcript V, p.9, lines 22-23). Therefore, she can not adapt to it, as she says: *As you can imagine…new situations require us a sense of adaptation. And I had a hard time to adapt myself to the Canadian's ways to handle with something* (Transcript V, p.7, lines 3-6).When asked why she did not want to talk, she told me a story: *Sometimes when I pronounced a word in the wrong way, my sister-in-law's husband corrected me. I did not like that. In my point of view he was rude doing that. I know he was trying to help me but I could not see like that. I think I was so sensible with many new situations that I could not accept such correction. Plus, Canadian has a different way to speak and I could not agree with that way. I was compared to Brazilian's…people…especially myself. In short, I was sad every time when he did that* (Transcript V, p.7, lines 8-15). When asked to comment on what she exactly meant by that she says, *I want to say that in general Brazilian people are more*

receptive with other people. I think that if you go to Brazil and you are learning Portuguese they would teach you with more please than Canadian...Sometimes, Canadian look like rude to correct you when you speak something wrong...it sounds like they do not have patience to teach you...it sounds like rude to me (Transcript V, p.7, lines 16-21). To conclude, Esther perceives the Canadian culture as rude, insensitive, and rather intolerant to imperfections of the language command the newcomers might have.

Xiaoran Li's comments on the cultural patterns she sees around her coincide with the previously mentioned emotions she expressed about her response to the challenges ofthe situation.

T.: Did you feel how a new culture influences you?

X.: Yeahh.. Yes, it made me more … (searching for a word) ambitious, yeah, I think so.(Transcript IV, p. lines 4-5). And then*:.. Sometimes I will feel uncomfortable, yes uncomfortable, because it's hard to make friends, and it isn't only the language matter, they can not understand what do you mean, what do you want to do, or unless you will think that "Oh I am a hard working girl, and you guys do nothing, and you know you just get drunk and go to parties, and doing nothing, kept fine"… Yes, I feel uncomfortable. Because you are already in the university, you should be working, but now you do nothing* (Transcript IV, p. 20, lines 7-15). Xiaoran Li is quite annoyed by the uncooperative classmates and it seems as if she attributed the causes of such behaviours to the cultural concepts. She comments further on the importance of team work: *Sometimes if you are doing the team work you need to combine every effort into the group, if you don't, they won't need you* (Transcript IV, p.20, lines 27-28). By that she implies that Canadian students are not cooperative as the do not value team work. In a word, personal frustrations Esther and Xiaoran Li experienced in the new setting

lead them to a view of the Canadian culture as insensitive, intolerant, uncooperative, and not appreciative of team work.

Theme three.

Impact of language learning on perceptions of self:

How do participants view themselves speaking L1 and L2?

It is the key theme of the study, and quite expectedly I was much interested in how it would be voiced by participants if at all. My concern though was that it was really hard to formulate questions to get the information related to inner processes learners might experience. I chose to start by asking about self-perceptions of each learner as 1) a personality; 2) as a person who speaks L1; 3) as the same person who speaks L2. 4) Would it be any different? If so, what differences might occur? By that I tried to construct some sort of mental space in learners referring to their inner perceptions of themselves using both languages. Any ego-transformation- related processes occur? Certainly, it was an uneasy task. Nonetheless, to my big satisfaction, the participants described their personalities and the way how they have been influenced by the new language they use quite adequately to my expectations in the sense that they did speak of their *selves.* Despite the answers vary across the participants, all of them confirm that they experienced unusual sensations somewhere deep inside on being switched to the mode of another language and mentality. Most commonly, the impact of external and internal factors can be perceived by change of sensations. Therefore, one of the key approaches I used in formulating questions was to ask participants whether they feel differently about themselves speaking another language, and if yes-- how? To begin with, all participants provide very similar comment that when they speak L1, they feel very confident and sociable while when they speak English- they feel shy, insecure and vulnerable, sometimes not willing to communicate much. Sarah describes herself

speaking Farsi as a very competent speaker: *Amazing, (laughing) proud of myself, now I understand how it works for me. So valuable for me. I understand exactly what word I can use to express myself. I know when I speak my language I impress everybody. (Laughing). It's so good for me. (*Transcript I, pp.5-6). Lily: … *because my first language is Chinese I think I am very good at communication and comprehension, expression. When I was in China my Chinese instructor always said "You are a good student"* (Transcript III, p.6, lines 19-23). Taewoo: *when I speak my first language I have more confidence,….I tend to be of an outgoing style, ..I socialize more (*Transcript II, p.8, lines 7-9). When asked how she views herself speaking her first language, Esther says:

*.: It is me. My language brings me part of my personality. My husband always says that I like to speak much. I always speak. When something happens, I can describe the situation in **every** single detail. In Brazil I always keep speaking, but now I have to stay quite. Many times here I don't want to see people; I don't want to talk with them* (Transcript V, p.9, lines 19-23). Xiaoran Li, as a multilingual person, refers to all of the languages she speaks quite differently. When I ask her about that ,she puts them in a certain order: *First it's Cantonese, and Chinese, now it's English, and another language is Korean* (Transcript IV, p.5, lines 8-9). It is interesting to note that English is put by her on the third place after Chinese, and only then she mentions Korean. I assume this order matches the degree of identification of herself to these languages. Xiaoran Li describes how her multilingual ability confuses her: .. *sometimes the language I have to use confuses me, I think OK, come on, Cantonese, I will transfer to Chinese, and then Chinese I transfer to English, sometimes I have to transfer to Korean.. Oh, it's terrible sometimes* (Transcript IV, p.5, lines 14-17). And then she adds: …*actually in Canada, I will use mostly English, in China- Cantonese, when I speak to my grandma or my grandpa, I willturn to another language, sometimes four languages. So, it's uhhh* !!!!!! (Transcript IV, p.5. lines 19-22). Confirming my guess about the degree of the affiliation

to each of the four of her languages, she says that she considers Cantonese as her mother tongue*…of course I feel very comfortable speaking Cantonese (laughs) very comfortable. I use more slang, like many Canadians, yeahh, I use more slang sometimes someone can not understand* (Transcript IV, p.13, lines 17-26).What draws my attention is when I asked Xiaoran Li if she thinks all the time in Cantonese, she says, *No. Of course, in China - yeah, but in Canada- no. I often think in English. Often I can't remember Chinese but I remember the English word* (Transcript IV, p.13, lines 24-26). That suggests that she feels quite comfortable not only I L1 what is so typical of the majority of the learners, but in L2 and L3 as well. Is it a new feature of the multilingual mind- not to be fixated on the primarily given set of verbal symbols? Or is it just a very individual feature of someone's' mindset, where the question of developing tolerance to the new ways of expression is out of place as an obsolete category? Messy and fairly confusing as it is, Xiaoran Li's multilingual performance has quite undermined the stereotyped view that L1 will be always the best in rendering certain meanings or emotions. When asked what language she would rather use to express negative feelings, she immediately says it will be English! *When something upsets me, I would say ****** (uses a swear word), Damn! Damn it! Something in this way. T.: Have you ever thought why you would do that? X.: No, I haven't. It comes like that* (Transcript IV, p.14, lines 12-16). In addition, Xiaoran Li says that if she wants to express some intimate feelings of friendship or alike, she would be more likely to use Cantonese. With that it does not mean that she attaches some pejorative quality to English as a language good only for swearing, she just opts for its expressiveness whenever it feels in place, as well as she would do with any other of her languages of use. *T.: Can you describe your emotions when you use English?*

X.: I love it. Actually I love every language, not only English (Transcript IV, p.16, lines 27-28).Trying to describe how Xiaoran Li was dealing with the multiplicity of her verbal

expression dwelling in diverse paradigms of the four languages she speaks, I will call it a drifting along and across the borderlines of the streams of different languages inside her --sometimes comforting, sometimes discomforting her sense of some steady reality. Xiaoran Li's comments on how confusing her multilingualism oftentimes is and how she loves all the languages she can employ for the immediate purposes of self-expression reminds me of "bitter milk", or fluid of contradictions mentioned by Madeline Grumet in her book with the same name. Explaining the meaning of its title, Grumet (1988) describes a ritual tonic used in Sri Lanka by young women when they get separated from their families. The tonic is a mixture of milk and crushed margosa leaves. Luxuriously symbolic, the use of that drink bears the taste of almost everything in life: sweetness of hopes and bitterness of falls, "love and rejection, sustenance and abstinence, nurturance and denial" (Grumet, 1988, p.xi). With all the polyvalent gamut of feelings, it can be attributed to the contradictory state of mind Xiaoran Li describes so well, when you do not know what is more in your actual experience: belonging or denial, match or mismatch, or most probably both? Thinking over Xiaoran Li's answers, I could not easily identify one sensation it inspired in me. And then I realized that I was happy to learn that the role of English was not purely instrumental for several of the participants, especially Taewoo , Xiaoran Li, and to some extent to Lily, who at first looked at English only as a key that unlocks the doors to success in life, but over time was fascinated by the sense of liberated spirit a communication in English invoked in her. It resonated much with what I feel when I learn a new language: it sets my spirit up into a discovery mood, widening the horizon of my personal inquiry into the diversity of the world around me.

By asking learners how they viewed themselves using English, I wanted to encourage them to compare their inside spontaneous reactions to the feeling of self put in a new virtual space framed by the conventions of the target language as well as of

cultural setting. Although this set of questions raises quite complicated issues, I was gladly surprised to see that almost all of my interviewees got the idea of such an unusual exercise for their mind. Several of them mention that they have never thought of such questions before, like Taewoo, who says, : *I am certainly confused because I have never thought about this kind of situation…*(Transcript II, p. 1, lines 24-25). Then he adds, … *I never tried to speak to somebody about that…. ….it's useful …. As we need to study in that kind of environment and we need to understand it*…. (Transcript II, p.17, lines 3-9). By situation he means the one when he has to explore his somewhat split sense of self when encountering new mode of communication. Quite amazingly, Taewoo recreates an inner process of using another language: *I think in my brain structure ….there is in the middle…. I always have my L1, like when I am listening in the middle there is a filter and there can be my L1. I ... if I hear one word, I try to think in my own language, as I want to express it first I think in my own language, and I translate it first* (Transcript II, p.8, lines 11-16). I asked him to talk more on that and here is what he said: *Because it is like something is locked in the middle, my L1 system,.. somewhere in the middle. When I speak or when I try to speak English I speak slowly, but when I use my first language I speak fast, much faster in presentation when I speak English* (Transcript II, pp.8-9, lines 23-26;3). Apparently, Taewoo tries to describe how this inner invisible mindset of his, corresponding to L1, is constantly filtering the incoming information and gradually is transferring it into the system corresponding to L2. While transforming the encoded information, it peruses through the versions of L2 equivalent expression and sets it up ready to produce in the target environment. The description of this process reminds me of the psychoanalytic approach to the ego functions: serving as a filter between the inward and outward reality, ego, in this case its linguistic realm, works as agency assessing, transforming and transferring information. Going back to Chapter I, page 10 of this paper, I can not but reiterate the key speculation concerning

the role of "*Language ego"* (Guiora, 1972a; Ehrman ,1996) as a personal filter that unavoidably influences learners' capacities to absorb and adapt to the new linguistic reality. When Taewoo describes the process of how he uses English, mentioning "locked somewhere in the middle", a filter of his L1", I could not but think how exactly it coincides with the speculation in question. It seems that despite the obvious strength and impedance such a first-language -related filter administer in learner's mindset, it can eventually undergo and, subsequently develop a sense of an inner transformation, causing learners to think, feel and act somewhat differently. The foremost sensations that follow are confusion, discomfort, uncertainty, shyness. Further on, these transform into a more widely ranged individualized reactions, including either tolerance of the splitting-like sensations, with a possible subsequent acceptance of such; or denial of any externally provoked, almost alien-like penetration into the personal mental space, perceived as a challenge, a threat to the habitual sense of self. Sometimes this denial can even fall into an extreme form of a *self-* denial, or denial of that part of yourself that betrays your original essential self by yielding to something different, by replacing the sense of a solid self to some fragmented structure, hardly known before…So far the experiences related to the challenge of acting like someone else have been indicated by several participants.

When asked more directly how he perceives him-*self* using English , or rather how differently he might perceive himself, Taewoo unexpectedly gives an example related to another Korean-speaker but him: *My personality will be different. One of my friends.. when she speaks in Korean, her voice is quiet, when she speaks English, she speaks very loudly. And she knows about that. When she speaks English she extremely … trying to speak loudly and clearly..*

T.: Why?

TK.: Because she came to Canada when she was 13 years old, after she graduated from primary school in Korea. And she has lived by herself with her elder sister ..so there 's two worlds for her at that time. Before … …before that time and after that time, because from one to thirteen years old she had a different world, and from thirteen years old to present time she's had another world (Transcript II, p.13, lines 9-21).

Being emotionally involved into that story, Taewoo continues: *Presently she is in the University of Manitoba. Actually she looks like a different person, you know!*

T.: Is it when she uses different languages?

T.K.: Yes. And even makes me scared! (laughing)…She is very cute when she speaks Korean and makes me help her, and she looks like a very shy girl, but when she speaks English she looks very confident. Of course, she speaks very naturally, she speaks English very well. Her pronunciation is almost perfect …Yes. It's like there are two people in one person.

T.: Can you relate your own experiences to that?

TK.: Last year I went to Korea and my friends, some of my friends said my behavior is different.

T.: Did they comment on what was different?

TK.: I am almost like the one who is from different culture (Transcript II, pp 13-14., lines 23-26; 3-16).

Sarah is more straightforward to define some transformative processes related to her sense of self, although she does not call it a split: *I think learning a new language made a different person from me.* (Transcript I, p.10 lines 11-12). *. I am not the same person as in my first language. Like maybe I have two sides. When you look at it, in one side is my first language and how I feel myself in it. On the other side of me my second language is . And you are not that girl any more. It is like you are someone else*

(Transcript I, p. 10, lines 14-19*). I mean learning a new language it's not just speaking a new language, It's … you act as a different person.*(Transcript I, p. 10, lines 22-24).

When asked what she means by that she further explains, Sarah says,

*S.: I became more serious and …(*looking for the word)

T.: Motivated? Organized?

S.: I think both. As I said already, you look at yourself and you think "Wow!" you are not that girl anymore, sometimes it' s like…. I am surprised at myself that I can do that. (Transcript I, p.11, lines, 10-14). I think it was yet quite hard for Sarah to precisely identify what difference the language learning stimulates I her. But she obviously tried to analyze these complicated sensations as we talked.

Another participant, Esther, felt very odd speaking English. For her this new language opened some unexpected and surprising qualities of her personality she never thought much about before. They were hidden somewhere at the back, temporarily unveiled. She felt too comfortable at home----to the extent she never analyzed what kind of person she actually was. When asked why language learning provokes hard feelings, she says, it *is hard to me.* (After a pause) *I have learned too much about myself. It is interesting because when I faced situations that tried to stop me I also faced my weakness; you know* (Transcript V, p. 4, lines 16-18). Comparing how comfortable her life in Brazil was to her life in Canada, Esther mentions how much dependent she felt on other people, what made her feel insecure and weak*:… I see myself very depend to other people. I need my husband or my sister-in-law to ask even for some water because I do not know how to do that. This situation makes me sad. Probably I should be more humble. But I never thought of myself as a proud person. I just think this new life is changing my personality….and I do not want to change because I know I am not a proud person…Maybe I do not find the right word to describe what I really feel and think* (Transcript V, p.5, lines 8-15). Being overwhelmed by her

new sense of her limited self, and at the same glad to be able to release that to me

Esther tries to explain why she felt so limited in new linguistic environment: …*I can't live dependent on people…at all. When you depend on people they think they can treat you in any way. Another point is that they have to realize that you need your time and space to learn better. Sometimes they do not know how to separate between* **help you** *and* **control you***. And I think I do not accept this help well because I do not want to be controlled by people* (Transcript V, pp.5-6 lines 21-24; 3-4). When I asked Esther if she would feel same energetic, responsible, emotional, sociable while speaking English as she did when she spoke Portuguese, Esther replied that no, it would be different*: …. I don't have the same strength. I can not be the same person. When you change the way of speaking I think you change something about yourself. I have lost …and I have gain. I am not sure if what I have gained is good enough comparing to what I lost. I can also think that I am not losing anything…it is just a different strength …a strength that comes from inside of me…I do not know yet. I am learning…* (Transcript V, p. 11-12, lines 22-24; 3-5). Most importantly, Esther emphasizes that despite her changed perceptions of herself, the values and beliefs that constitute the core of her personality, will remain untouched*: I am learning. Learning is good. I am trying to accept the changes since they do not change my values and believes. I am discovering a new strength that comes from inside of me* (Transcript V, p.13, lines 9-11).

Xiaoran Li's perceptions of how differently she might feel using English describe her feeling of becoming more assertive, aggressive and ambitious. When asked directly if the new situation brought in something new in her personality, she says*: Yes, it made me more …* (searching for a word) *ambitious, yeah, I think so* (Transcript IV, p.18, lines 24-28). At the same time she found it difficult to clearly indicate what causes such new sensations about her:

T.: …you started by saying you were very friendly and now these experiences in the new environment kind of made you angry. So would you say that it's English or English speaking culture that invoked these qualities in yourself?

X.: yeah, I don't know…(Transcript IV, p.20, lines, 18-26).

Xiaoran Li consistently refers to how angry and assertive she started feeling in the new linguistic setting, however, she does not connect it directly to the use of English. I wondered if the qualities that Xiaoran Li discovers in her self would appear only in the English-speaking environment, but she said they would seem to follow her:

T.: If you come back to China would you think that you'd keep these qualities?

X.: Yes. I think a little bit aggressive, it's OK (Transcript IV, p.20, lines 24-26). I think that the new quality that Xiaoran Li develops transpired as a result of some inner defence on encountering challenging or unusual events her studies in Canada have in store for her. Because of that it is quite hard to clearly identify what actually stimulates her to become more aggressive- cross-cultural discrepancies, or language-related causalities.

Of all participants who agree to notice some new dimensions of themselves learning and using English, Lily is the only one who says that she does not see herself any differently:

T.: So you would say you are the same whether you speak Chinese or English?

L.: yeah (Transcript III, p. lines 18-20).

T.: Can you say that using English somehow influences your behavior or thinking?

L.: Ahh…. (Transcript III, p.9, lines 21-23).

Lily did not answer this question at all, and I think she just did not understand what I asked her- so natural for her was a process of switching to another language:

T.: You have described how Chinese way of expression and English way of expression are very different. And now you have to use both languages all the time: Chinese with your friends and English at school. How does it tell on you?

L.: I think if I get used to it, I don't think it's very hard.

T.: Can you easily switch from one language to another?

L.: Yeah, yeah (Transcript III, p. 12, lines 12-20).

Interestingly, despite talking so much about differences in the style of oral and written expression between English and Chinese, and how challenging for her sometimes was the adaptation, she still could not recall any hard feelings English performance might have invoke. She described her personality as open and sensitive. She said she could get hurt fast. However, even her less successful English learning experiences did not seem to hurt her in any way. She enjoyed her English-speaking role even more than that of Chinese*: …obviously I think it's a tough question because I compare theses two different environments and I realize which one is better for my personality. Maybe some people like the Chinese culture, but I prefer this kind of Canadian environment, where my personality can go open. But I think when back to China .. I… I … want to keep my personality. I want to keep open But I still will have to follow a little bit Chinese culture because I must hang with people* (Transcript III, p.14, lines 8-16). I think that Lily belongs to people with wide ego boundaries (Ehrman): her open, outgoing personality is seeking for the most comfortable environment she can freely express herself in; at the same time she can condense her openness to feel adequate in the situation which requires certain closeness and containment, in this case at home, in China, where adherence to the group mentality is very important for the sense of belonging.

To sum up, by sharing views of themselves using English compared to how they views themselves using L1 or other languages they speak, the participants demonstrate an array of responses, mostly focusing on influences their sense of self undergo while

speaking, writing or reading in English. Three learners (Taewoo, Sarah, Esther) highlight that they feel like different people using English or they experience a sensation close to a split personality-like one. Along with that, two learners, Taewoo and Sarah, perceive this sensation as positive, while Esther- quite oppositely, as a very negative, even hostile to her comfortable sense of self, revealing how suppressing it is. Lily's responses do not suggest any changes in her self-perception.

Theme four

Impact of language learning on perceptions of general personal development

Quite naturally, this theme emerged across the interviews as confirmation of the axiom that language learning as part of educational experience contributes to the development of the learner. Among educational practices second language acquisition seems to be the one most vividly demonstrating the importance of informational and interpersonal functions of language inciting personal development of the learner. If in the previous theme causation might be speculative due to the complicated nature of the phenomena like personal sense of self, the current theme seems to be out of any question- language learning does create a significant empowering shift in personal growth. Even the learners, whose experiences are described as more challenging than successful, confirm how transformative such experiences appear for their self-development. The dynamic nature of intrapersonal processes related to English use is perceived by study participants through the observed growing sense of maturity, responsibility, self- discipline, critical thinking and confidence. An increased awareness of benefits cross-cultural communication brings up can be clearly seen in responses all five learners mention. Among the most common comments I come across with on that theme is that English learning experiences opened their minds, new understanding of

the culture they live in, new ways of expression, and ultimately a sense of a more matured, developed self.

Sarah: … *it just opened my eyes. Yeah, because I talked to different people, different people in the world, and I listen to them and I like Yeah, it's a good point …Yeah, that's sounds as a good point…* (Transcript I, p. 17, lines 20-25).

Esther. *I can also think that I am not losing anything…it is just a different strength …A strength that comes from inside of me…I do not know yet. I am learning* (Transcript V, p. 12, lines 3-5). *I am discovering a new strength that comes from inside of me.* (Transcript V, p.13, lines 10-11).Taewoo emphasizes how English use makes him feel more proud of himself:

*TK.: Ah-h, I feel nervous but sometimes I feel proud of me as I speak two languages. It's kind of balance- sometimes I am nervous, sometimes I am proud, and I get.. ah.
 hope again*

T.: Why do you feel proud?

TK.: 'Cause I am using the most common language in the world, English, that means… that brings to me…a feeling of [being] proud (Transcript II, p.11, lines 17-24).

Similarly, Lily also talks about a sense of deep satisfaction she experiences on overcoming challenges of communication in English: *Sometimes I feel satisfied because I can handle a new language and... I reached that; I got improvement, so I feel satisfied (*Transcript III, p. 2, lines 12-14). She also says she becomes stronger. On being asked what impact English learning makes on her, she says: *It's a very exciting experience, and challenge but I think lots of interesting to me I like learning English. I think everything in this world is a challenge because if you don't have a challenge in your life it's boring. I think from that challenge I got a lot of knowledge about new culture. I know more people because I know English and I can communicate with other people. And other people with know me. It's a very good thing*! (Transcript III, p.16, lines 9-17). Thus

a theme of inner personal strength, maturity, self-respect, personal worth when overcoming obstacles and satisfaction with achievements makes the significant resonance across the interviews.

Such opinions show how progressively the individual insights into language and its culture expand one's intellectual and emotional horizon. Availability of multiple expression, curiosity towards the world events, establishment of constructive intercultural relations- these are the benefits of language learning according to the participants. Truly, it is hard to describe it better than Xiaoran Li does:

> *I think that language learning makes an unforgettable experience to everyone, 'cause you are not going learning only a communication tool, it's like … a ... for example you don't know to change your way, like In English you may say "I love you" , it's a direct way, but sometimes I want to say it in another way, " your smile is like a rose" I want to say this way, I want to change. I think about it in a different way and another language makes it possible. ….I don't want to stay in my space, I want to see more, make friends, doing more things…Languages open the world…*(Transcript IV, p.22, lines 15-24).

Narratives

Walking on both sides…

The second part of research data includes two narratives: Esther's, in the form of a reflective journal, and mine, in the form of a personal story. Both are related to the English language learning transformative influence on the perceptions of self it incites. Put simply, the perception of the learner about herself studying and using English based on description of the lived experiences is put in the focus of both. On a more poetic note, the stories refer to "secret affairs of the soul" with English. Both stories are very personal, even intimate, I would say in the sense that they mostly disclose very private responses of the authors to the events related to the presence of the new language in their life. Notably, in this part of the research I act as a participant. That creates an invaluable dialectical perspective for me as a researcher. Choosing to provide my reflective positioning towards the target phenomenon somewhere at the back of my mind I realized that I was seeking for the legitimacy of being more subjective, more metaphorical, more emotional and even irrational. I thought that in that case I would not feel trapped in the tightly circumscribed boundaries between the two main forces that made any research happen. There has been always something bothering me in the clichéd dichotomy of *participant-researcher* relationship .The researcher is seen as "a man of knowledge", while the participant as a source of the raw material the wise man will build his further knowledge on. Both parts are seen unequal, and to much extent they *are not* equal. However, they are *un*equal not only in the sense I just mentioned- where the power of the researcher is so irrevocably granted. At the same time, participant has also a certain power: the power of being herself. Participants can say whatever they want and however they want since their right to take whatever role they choose is not questioned. They can be human beings in all the complexity and

contradictoriness of the human nature- ever changing and never revealing to the full. Moreover, any illogicalities or even whimsical twists of the evidence they can give are even considered more appealing to researcher as some rich, original data to be interpreted. In a word, no matter what participant says and how, it will be usually seen as a basis for research accomplishment. What if she just tries to please the researcher? On the contrary, the accepted image of researcher is quite limited in my view. If the participant is presupposed to be subjective, the researcher ostensibly *has* to be objective. But has she? Isn't researcher a human being with the inevitable vulnerability of her complexity? Does she have the right to be complex at all? Or once she declares an engagement in research she has to delete the complexities and become a purely-pure litmus-paper-type-of-a-person, poised to the perfection in her potentiality to judge the degree of *objectivity* in what others say? An imposed stereotype attached to the role of researcher demands scrutiny of the insights into glimpses of other people's lives as if the researcher were a supernatural creature who *can* be objective. But can she? How much of the subjectivity is in our "objective" attempts to assess somebody else's evidence? These questions were eating up my mind when I was positioning myself in the study. It is they that made me decide to write a narrative as part of it. A *subjective* part. Choosing to add my story of how English embarked on my life I was selfishly giving myself the right to be subjective, to be myself the way I was: ordinary and extraordinary as all of us are, weak and strong, sincere and evasive, rational and irrational, tasting the bitter milk of all controversial faces of life. I just wanted to be human, not superhuman. I did not want to make my evidence on the target topic more qualified. Neither wished I to be an impartial or wise observer of my students' experiences but from the vantage ground of my position as their former teacher and/or researcher. Looking at my self-interview what the narrative *"Adventures of Alice in the Wonderland and Through the Looking Glass"* actually is, allowed me to exercise my

alter-ego dimension once again, this time in a new attempt to jump over the limitations of the conventional participant-researcher dichotomy. In a word, the narrative format of my personal insight into the adventures of the self in the Englishland makes me feel more a participant than a researcher. I genuinely celebrated this because it helped me to feel more complete again.

In a paradoxical fashion, Esther's contribution in the form of reflective notes she added to the interview given before was of the similar nature, yet in its reversed value: writing her journal Esther became more of a researcher than a participant. Quite surprisingly, it turned out that we switched the roles in using one form of research inquiry, a personal story. I was more spontaneous, while Esther was more analytical. I traced my high moments of the new language experience with the impetuosity of a child, while Esther looked at her experience through the perspective of a mature person whose childhood's bliss was over when describing her identity crisis in the new environment. Both of us tried to look into the core of our selves knowing that our formal roles in the study would be switched: I was supposed to be analytical being the researcher and she - spontaneous, being the interviewee. It was my hope that the reversed perspectives we applied in the narratives would add some missing meaning to the exploring of the almost unfathomable institution of *language ego.* I felt as if the obscure and contradictory nature of the target phenomenon dictated me to choose no less contradictory ways of its exploration. It seems as if groping for any logical answer to the question posed we had to be somewhat illogical, irregular, overtuned…

Both narratives will come below. To preserve the authenticity of the stories I kept the language of both pieces untouched. Normally data materials are not included in the text of the thesis. I felt that to be able to discuss the stories I needed to look at them as part of the whole rather than some raw material to be simply read, digested and interpreted. As I am taking a role of one of the participants in that dimension of the

study, I felt as if I needed some more distance from my own narrative. I was trying to become Alice in that story, looking through the looking glass of myself speaking English. At the same time, I was happy that Esther's voice could be equally represented in the midst of the study just the way my personal story would. Placing both stories in the middle of the thesis text is seen then as a break between the interviews and narratives' discussion. It is seen as a stream of unembellished, uncombed flow of consciousness. Some glimpses of lived experiences of the two language learners. Some impressions of what the world of languages creates in two people's minds…

Narratives: Esther

English Learning – June 13, 2007

.….I am taking AEPUCE, learning how to write academically, and living personal conflicts. One of them is that after twenty nine years writing in Portuguese, my first language, I need to learn how to write in English. Sometimes I ask to myself what teachers are teaching me. It may be that I just need to follow rules and to use an objective way to express my ideas. Maybe this is enough to get high marks. But good academic performance is not my main purpose. English learning has changed not only my view about writing but also my personality. My writing style is more subjective than objective; consequently, I have difficulty to express my ideas using a direct way. Regarding my personality, I usually use ten words to say something that many people would say using only three words. As I think that both writing style and personality walk together, it is impossible to change one without affecting the other. I believe that words can show some features of personality. Since I came to Canada, I have lived some hard times and, interestingly, it has been reflected in my essays. They show exactly how I feel. My ideas are not organized because my feelings and thoughts are confused. It is not easy to understand and to use a different format to express my ideas after twenty nine years written in a different way. How to modify my style of writing without transforming my personality? I have lived situations where simple paragraphs are ghosts that bother me during the whole night. What is the problem? I think that I don't know how to write any more. My mind is full of ideas; however, I don't know how to write them down comprehensibly. Can somebody imagine how I feel? It is confusing. It is a mix of feelings such as fear, panic, tiredness, etc. The problem is because I don't know to express my ideas using English language.

Sometimes, I can hear external voices saying that the real problem is because I don't want to change my way to write. In other moments, I can hear internal voices saying that the main problem is because I can't change my personality. I am confused. I don't have confidence to write or even to open my mind to learn a new language naturally.

Friday in the Church – June 14, 2007

Where is the right way?

Today is Friday. I was sad during the whole day. Actually, I have been depressed in the last week because I have been tired of learning a new language, culture, rules and behaviors. I don't have patience to wait the positive results of this learning. It takes a long time. I can't see what is going on. As volunteer in the Church, every Friday I go there to do whatever is necessary. But in this Friday I was not feeling well personally, and I could not hide my feelings. As soon as I got in the Church I spend some time praying and asking strength to God. I want to continue even when the circumstances try to stop me. I looked at the Brazilian flag and I remembered the God's purpose for Marcos and me. We are in Winnipeg to do the God's desire. Therefore, I can't stop. A foreign language can't stop me.

Where is the doubt?

After that time of praying, I didn't stop crying and Pastor Dan called me to talk about what was happening with me. It was a unique time. He was in front of me and I talked every single feeling and thought that was inside of me. I didn't realize, until that time, that I was speaking English with a Canadian person and I didn't have difficult to find words to express what I was feeling. I just spoke with my heart, without boundaries or even limitations. I had freedom to be who I am. It was wonderful.

Where is the answer?

As soon as the conversation was over I was better. Pastor Dan, a God's man, listened to me, gave me some advices, and we prayed together. He said to me that he

understood every word that I had spoken. He also told me about some people from Africa who have difficulty to speak English when they come to Canada; consequently, they also live some conflicts like mine. In the end of the conversation, I didn't have answers for all my questions yet. However, I realized two things. First, I am not living this challenge in this new world alone. Second, I don't need to change who I am to learn a new language. When I speak with my heart I can express what I want in any place of the world.

<div align="center">Writing Class – June 18, 2007</div>

This journal is not only about a writing class but also about a place for growth. I have faced some uncomfortable situations to learn English and sometimes I am not sure if the challenge is a new language or my personality. For example, in the last writing class the teacher gave some questions to provoke a discussion about the large amount money earned by sportsmen. She wanted to know who either agree or disagree with this fact, and then each student gave his/her opinion about that. When I presented my view about this topic I didn't get to explain the reasons for disagreeing with that; however, other students who agreed knew how to explain their reasons and did it very well. I felt blocked because they argued against my view and I could not defend my opinion anymore. I was feeling like a warrior who lost his sword during the war. Without his sword the warrior can't fight and look at his enemy as if he was already defeated. Such was me; I lost my self-confidence and could not speak my opinion anymore. Notably, my behavior in the next class, speaking, was negatively influenced by the experience I had in the writing class. So, can you guess what happened in the speaking class? Of course I kept silence in the whole class because I didn't have confidence to speak in English. Interestingly, the key moment of this experience was not during these classes but when I got home. I made an evaluation about my day and realized that my "weapon" was my confidence, not my English skills. Therefore, my weapon to win that

battle is not only to know what to say but to have confidence to do so. If I think optimistically, the English language may be a big chance for me to win the battle for confidence inside me. It is inside me where I find limitations, shame, and lack of confidence to express my ideas in a different language. The problem is not the language; I have the language. What I need to develop is the confidence to use it in the best way – a way that is not against but beside me. Similarly, even the most and skilled warrior could lose the battle if he doesn't have his sword on his hands. That is, the point here is not matter of having ability or not, but of having confidence to use it.

<div align="center">Red River Exposition – June 21, 2007</div>

Today I had a good experience in Winnipeg. And good experiences result in good reflections. I went to the Red River Exposition and I had a new perspective for a moment experienced before hand in my life. I was in a park just like in Brazil, but surrounded by people who spoke different languages. Surprisingly enough, my impression was like I was at home. And I had a feeling of freedom in my mind, heart and body. I realized how I could be influenced by that environment. In my mind I had a picture as if I was in Brazil and even seen different faces I enjoyed each moment there. When you make associations you can learn how to accept something better. I think this can help my adaptation process here in Canada. When I associate certain moments, places, people with what I already had in Brazil, I immediately accept them. For example, I like to go to the church here in Winnipeg because it resembles my church in Brazil: small, simple, with a variety of people, and friendly. I also like Pastor Dan because he reminds my lovely Pastor Junior in Brazil. On the other hand, I reject Canadian food because there is not any similarity with Brazilian food. I could not like the winter time and everything which comes together with this season such as clothes and the scenery. In my city in Brazil, we have summer time all year long there I can use just few clothes and have the opportunity to see ocean and dunes portraying beautiful

scenes. Plus, it was hard for me to study with adolescents since that in Brazil I was working with professionals. So, among many abrupt changes you usually look for similarities to feel more comfortable in a foreign place. Therefore, I need to think deeply about which associations I should do between English and Portuguese so that I accept this new language in my life. The pleasure of making friends, of worshiping God, of expressing my ideas and feelings may be a way to make associations that will open a completely new world to me.

<center>Confession – August 17, 2007</center>

I was trying to resist writing about this day but as after three days I am still thinking about that I decide to write down. Maybe I could forget about that as soon as I finish this writing. Last Friday was my graduation from APEUCE, English program, in the University of Manitoba and after the graduation I had a dinner with some Canadians friends in my home. So, when we finished eating the Canadian dinner, we were beginning a conversation. Interestingly, we had three Canadian and three Brazilian people in the room talking to each other. First, I kept silence and just observe the conversation because usually I don't feel comfortable to speak in English among a group of people, familiar or unfamiliar, I don't have interesting to give my opinion. However, the conversation took a way that I had to open my mouth and to say that: I will not change my behavior to learn how to speak a new language. I don't like of the way that Canadian people think and do many things and until I am convincing that Canadian way is better than Brazilian way I would not accept their way in my life. And this is not lack of capacity of adaptation as they argued but it is my right to live according to I believe. In that time I said: if Canada is a multicultural country people should respect my way and I will do the same with them. I defended the idea that is good to me live here now because I know different ways to do several things and I can choose the way which I think that is better to me. I gave some examples to show them that I don't want to

change my personality because I am learning a new language. To speak some English words it is supposed to move my mouth differently…..I feel an artificial person if I do that. I care about my marriage consequently I don't want to absorb the individualism way that Canadians are marriage because my husband and I have a treasure: communication with each other. We like to care and help each other. Normally, I can't see these behaviors in Canadian couples. In my job in Brazil I was paid to think, to give new ideas to innovate. However, in Canada, I just need to follow rules if I want to be successful…..ridicule. I can do anything when I am limited by boundaries….plus, boundaries that don't make sense. I need to live here, to do stupid things, respect them but I really don't like. Perhaps, I will spend more time that normal to speak English because of this feeling. But as I said before: I will not change my way to think while I believe that is better than what I already have. I have the capacity of adaptation because I am here, I do many things that I don't' like and agree. However, I would not leave these situations change what I am and the way that I think.

<p align="center">P.S. July, 2008.</p>

During my English learning I experienced many situations. Most of them were not good but they brought some learning. I would like to report few words about these situations that I lived. First, I would like to mention how hard was to be in the English class every day during nine months. Many of the students who were there could speak English better than me and they were younger than me. So, I felt very uncomfortable to be among them. Actually, my feeling was embarrassment…because I could not communicate with them. Sometimes, I was mad with them when they laughed me because I could not say what I was supposed to say. I knew I should not have had this kind of behaviour because I was learning English…it was a time of learning that would require me patience. I also experienced many challenges to write essays in English because I have a different style to describe things….in Brazil we write every single

detail about something…while …here in Canada we have to be more direct….and to use short sentences. All of these situations brought me lack of confidence to do simple things that I was used to do. Another experience that I would like to share happened when I went to the Red River exposition. In that day I was surrounded of people from diverse countries and cultures. In that day I had fun and I could feel like home…because in my country I always was going to this kind of exposition. So, that environment remaindered my country and makes me feel at home. Even my English was better in that day because I was comfortable with that place and people. It was very interesting for me to see how things can change the way that you behave and acquire confidence. However, after this day I come back to the real English life where I spent more time with people who I could not feel confident to speak. One Friday I was very sad…and upset with myself that I went to talk to my Pastor….it was the best choice that I did in that afternoon. Even though I was crying I could express my feelings and thought to him…and he talked with me in a way that makes me feel better…..he remaindered me that I was living a time of learning. This learning would make me stronger. I really knew that he was talking from God to me and I kept those words in my heart until the day when I would speak English and I would be able to help people like me (who could not speak English at all). After that I started helping a friend of mine in my church to teach kids. This environment helped me to improve my English …and the more important point….I was among people who I trusted. What I can say today…..about English? English is more than I new language to me. It is an opportunity to know different people, culture, thought, feelings…..to know a different Esther….going deeply inside of me…and open my eyes to see a new world. This new place offers the opportunity to make diverse choices…..and I have choose not changing values that I believe are true even though people in this country do not believe them….I do….and I must to be strong to do that. However, I also have learned to open myself to ideas and

views that can improve me as person. To do that…I have to break ties and false concepts ….I must be strong as well." Today I overcome challenges in my life in a different way than before. I trust in people in a different way than before….I face uncomfortable situations in a different way than before. English learning changed me. I think that I am not so confident to do certain things than before….but I believe that I am stronger to do other things than before. I can confirm that English learning did not change me at all. I did not lose my values and believes. I did not exchange them to be part of this new world. I just adapted myself to this new place…but and I keep my concepts about many things with me…they are what I believe…nobody can change them …nothing can change them…English learning cannot do that. I rather prefer to influence people than to be influenced by them. Maybe I would never speak English language fluently….I do not mind….I really desire to speak Esther's language….because these words will make the difference in the people's life …..these words came from Esther's heart. And Esther's heart belongs to Jesus.

Narratives: Alice

Alice's Adventures in Wonder/Englishland and

Through the Looking Glass.

Chapter I

Down the rabbit hole: My first encounter with English

There was not a moment to be lost: away went

Alice like the wind… (p.15).

Now I am opening out like the largest

telescope that ever was!(p.21).

- "OK, now, come up to me, my dear; closer, please. The-e-r-e you go; can you repeat that rhythm after me?" And so the tall woman with bright make-up, whom my mother and I met the other day on a bus, knocked some rhythm with her fingers on the desk in a small classroom. I repeated exactly how I heard the rhythm, all my fingers clenched together in a little fist. She seemed to be satisfied with what she heard from that.

- "OK, now how about this?" And this time she made the rhythm longer. I repeated what I heard, knocking my fist against the polished surface of the desk again.

- "Now try that." And the sound of that rhythmical knocking was as long as it was complicated. I did the same.

"That's very good! Let's try this then!" And she pronounced a combination of unusual sounds stressing the first part of it: "Say "Flower!". I said: "Flower!" wondering why such a serious big lady would spend her time on playing this repetition game with me as everything was so easy and funny. Meanwhile, she went on by saying;

- "OK, say 'Squirrel.' and despite the fact that the sounds of that word were different from the ones that we normally used to pronounce Russian words, I repeated it exactly as she said. I could only feel how pleased she was because she immediately exclaimed, "That's amazing! She must study in our school! She should start this week; no, she will start tomorrow!" And she rushed to her office to bring my mother a form to be filled out, asking neither my mother nor me if we would like to do so…

Yes, it was just like that: On one sunny September day, my mother met her former English teacher, Alexandra by name, from the courses she had taken some time ago for her graduate program. It appeared that Alexandra became a principal of *Specialized English School* at that time, and as I had just started my new school the day before, Grade 1, she simply asked why I had not been sent to the school she was a principal of. My mother hesitated with an answer, as we never planned for me to start any specialized schools. Alexandra kept on insisting that her school would be a better choice as I could learn English beginning from Grade 1 and not Grade 5 as all the secondary schools normally offered. It was much unexpected and we did not plan to switch the schools right after my first school day. However, my mother agreed to bring me to that specialized school for the *audition* to check if I had a good ear for music because the foreign language learning as she said -- especially English learning -- needed a good ear for music, tone and rhythm. I was fascinated by that even though I could not fully understand why and how the learning of some language could be compared to music.

Much later I did realize what they meant by that fascinating comparison: Every language has its melody, rhythm and tone. When I was more involved in learning and using different languages, I also came to understanding that every language also has its palette of colors, its texture, its spirit and soul. I came to an amazing discovery that we

feel languages quite similarly to how we feel anything else in this world-- with all our five senses.

Perhaps this extends even by the sixth as well, when we intuitively evaluate how we might be dealing with a certain language. When I was attracted by the Japanese culture and actually bought a self-guiding textbook to learn Japanese, even before opening it, I felt how profoundly inadequate my high expectations of any learning success had actually been! Just a few glances at the Hiragana hieroglyphs on the cover of the textbook stirred up the waves of doubts regarding my abilities to deal with such a peculiar alphabet. I did not see the hieroglyphs for the first time, but it was something different in seeing them as part of the textbook I prepared for learning. Perhaps the more clear-cut sense of what an ocean of unpredicted meanings and ways of its expressions were waiting for me in that book. It was a pursuit I was definitely not yet ready for.

The five senses I mentioned before did seem quite an exaggeration, as we could not obviously touch the language physically. Yet if we think how our tongue touches the lips or alveoli to pronounce another tricky consonant from a new language, or how our teeth make the barrier for the air to be pushed through in a certain way to pronounce a new language's vowels--is it not that physical touch that we undertake to use the language? We definitely **are** in touch!

Visually we come into contact with the language through signs. Audibly---through sounds. Can we taste the language? Again, of course not in the sense of its literal meaning, but, boy, do we not feel the taste of the language we use by choosing the particular ways of expression it has in store for us? And every language has hundreds of different ways of how to express our ideas or emotions based on its ethnic, historical, social, and ideological, you name it, background. More so, the sensations we thrive upon using languages come not one by one but in a complicated extrapolated version of

all and often ----quite spontaneously. I read and I *feel* the harmony of the words put in a certain order that create the exact meaning of an idea. I talk and *feel* the treat of pronouncing some unusual sounds that evoke a certain obvious response in my interlocutor, and again I cannot separate the senses the conversation evokes in me. Undoubtedly, English learning awoke my personal synethesia from its subconscious sleep. I heard the melody of the English sounds and saw colorful images emanating from somewhere inside bringing the fusion of different senses to life.

Coming back to the story I started with, that was the day when I plunged into the ocean of an overwhelming mixture of sounds, signs, tunes of the English language while not even knowing the affect it would make on me. Continuously throughout my life, I was sipping all multi-sensual aspects of my further linguistic experiences each time I had an encounter with a new language, (German in junior high, Italian much later, Chinese most recently), but it was definitely English that produced that sensational feeling of my first personal discovery related to the nature of language. I did feel like Alice who fell into the well of unexpected and unpredicted adventures. I was completely fascinated by the interplay of the English words and sounds that opened a new world for me: A world of my new self in that linguistic dimension.

Chapter II

Why do you cry, Willy? Why do you cry?

After the mesmerizing "squirrel" and "flower" English came to me through the plain drills of "*Yes, it is! No, it is not!* –Now, e*verybody in chorus! One, two!"* The teacher was standing in front of the class conducting our discordant refrain. She really looked like a conductor of a small orchestra where instruments were our voices, and no one knew the melody exactly. We were mostly imitating what teachers said to us. So much the better; you need not add or multiply some boring numbers like in Math, or copy the grammar rules like in Russian. All you had to do was take a deep breath and---almost shout all

together- "*Yes, it is. No, it isn't!*" What fun! I immediately picked up not only the rhymes *"Good morning, good morning! Good morning to you*", and "*Why do you cry, Willy? Why do you cry?"* but all the commands teachers gave us in English: "*Clean the blackboard! Open the door! Open your books at page 5! Sit down! Stand up!"* It was so nice to hear some funny calls and be able to perform the actions they meant. At that time those direct commands seemed to me some magic incantations taken from a fairy tale; not everybody would understand what to do ---yet I knew! My peers from schools where English was supposed to be taught much later, at Grade 5, did not have any idea of what we were doing and that created a feeling of some coded secret rituals the English class was about. There was a little slant of superiority in that sensation; however, it was not to the extent I felt much above my backyard pals. It was just a nice game plenty of fantasy.

The English class had its charm even in things you would never imagine funny at all before. It was so funny to hear the word *blackboard,* for example. First of all, it was always brown in all our schools at that time. Second of all, why would it be important to mention the color of the board? We would never mention color as part of a compound noun in Russian – we just used the word *board.* And how about the funny word *chalk* ? Or *duster*? Suddenly, the everyday presence of these routinely used classroom objects found its new light of fantasy in the English class because English, curiously enough, had its own names for them, brightening them up, making them somewhat different... No more ordinarily sounded words, no more of the things called in one way: they all got their differently named twins reflected through the looking glass of the English language…The world began to expand *curiouser and curiouser, and* as a result of that expansion I was also *opening like the largest telescope that ever was!* I was learning to perceive the world through English, not only through Russian or Moldavian as I did before. I loved all the languages I was using and every time I could find a new way to

express myself, these languages were there for me with all their incredible diversity and plenteousness.

Meanwhile, English learning progressed through its carefully established stages. Each class usually started with the choral drills of commands or set phrases and even sentences (*I am on duty today. I get up early in the morning*)*;* then we worked on rhymes. After that the teacher would ask us to repeat the drill one by one, not all together. That was the happiest moment for me as I knew them so well--- no worries, no concerns. "*Why do you cry, Willy? Why do you cry? Why Willy? Why, Willy? Why, Willy, why?"–* the words were flowing like a stream of round sounds in my mouth, multiplying like the ripples in the water; smaller ones were the beginning of the larger ones and they were playing tags catching each other… "*Why, Willy? Why, Willy? Why, Willy? Why?"* I also liked the contrast between the soft *w* and rolling *r* in *cry.* It was bringing up again an image of water surrounded by rocks in my mind when I pronounced the rhyme. *Why?* was also perceived as white and soft while *cry* as something gray and hard. *Why do you cry?* The light splashes of water broke into the slippery rocks of the river bank*: Why do you cry?...* That game of sounds, colors and images was even more real for me than the meaning of the words. Quite interestingly, I was not even noticing that some poor little Willy was presumably crying at that moment. It seemed as if the literal meaning of the words were pushed to the backstage by the more spellbinding flow of alternating sounds. Paradoxically, the contents made much less sense than the form. If we think of how the child explores her first language, the symbolic meaning of words seems to stand a little aside from the form the child is trying to imitate at the moment when she is listening to her parents' talk. It comes as the game of copying whatever you see and hear; it is just the probe of the voice, so to speak, in L1. That's why for the first language

formation the form and its sense go more closely together. When we learn the next language we basically already know the meaning of the objects and we are not so much interested in why that animal with a funny tail is called a dog or a cat. Now we are mostly focused on how to name the animal in that new language and how to pronounce its name as the native speakers do. The names for objects in the first language also might seem important, but we almost never question them: We do not normally ask our parents why the cat is called the cat and the apple, the apple. We take it for granted as the absolute name for this object for a very simple reason -- it is given to us. With the second language we are attracted to the form much more as we need to learn it as *another version* of the object's name. It is also given in the sense we do not invent it, of course. But the mechanism of recognition and memorization of new words is still different. The English word *cat* for me was, first of all, a combination of new sounds that created a lexical unit for the cross-linguistic synonymic cluster for the Russian word "koshka", and thus it became for me a cross-linguistic synonym to the Russian word I knew before. With every new language, this cluster will include then *die Katze* (German), *la chat* (French), *o mytze* (Romanian), *una gatta* (Italian), *mao* (Chinese). If I look at this synonymic cluster, I will definitely not focus on the meaning of the object because it is the same. But as a L2 or L3 learner I will be mostly interested in the new form, the sounds, the letters, the number of both; the articulation of the sounds and writing of the characters. The meaning of the object will be expressed through the form created by the forms of target language.

I may be also curious about what grammatical category these new forms present. I will be definitely noticing that as in my L1 this object has a gender differentiation in the other languages I learn. However, trying to memorize the word in any of these languages, I will be completely absorbing the symbolism of the sounds used to denote it and not the symbolism of its semantics. To me, it is a very essential difference between

L1 and all the subsequent acquisition of languages: Despite the fact we also take the offered word as a given, we do not concentrate on its semantics to the depth unless it is an abstract noun or a verb. In the case with certain abstract nouns or verbs that denote more complicated things, we will still have to work on the shade of its meaning when we acquire its phonetic or written form in a new language. To illustrate, the abstract noun *love* cannot be hard to learn in all the languages I already mentioned because it is quite universal and *unisemantic* across the languages.

However, if we take the English word *affection*, although its first dictionary meaning would be "love", I will not choose the Russian word "liubov" to find its synonym in Russian, but rather "*priviazannost*" ("attachment") or "chuvstvo *blizosti*," which literally means a "sense of closeness".

Basically, it refers to the extended group of synonyms multilingual speakers draw from different linguistic systems to create a multi-lingual database of synonymic expressions to be retrieved when they switch the codes. The same process refers to antonyms, but they occupy a secondary importance. Antonymic clusters across languages might be created by the learners in order to extend the perception of names of things or actions or its descriptive attributives (adjectives and adverbs) from the opposite.

Interestingly, the focus on the phonetic and written form can result in quite unpleasant jokes for a learner. It may happen when the analogical sound combinations in the L1 might sound very unusual, funny, and even indecent in L2. There are lots of examples when a very neutral word in L2 is immediately associated with a taboo word in L1 only because they homonymically repeat each other. It happens merely because when we hear the new L2 words, we unwillingly compare them with what we already know, and that largely influences how we perceive and remember them. That is quite different from L1 acquisition when we have nothing to compare with and the new

vocabulary with its complex relationship between a signifier and signified is simply taken for granted when the word is learned for the first time. I wonder if bilinguals who learn both languages at the same age experience the processes similar to those for the adult second language learners or even for those children for whom L1 is represented in two linguistic versions, say English and French learned simultaneously. This is obviously a topic for a separate research.

Chapter III

One, two, Buckle my shoe: Grammar comes easy

Coming back to my first English drills, they were followed a bit later with Mother Goose rhymes and, boy, if I am not grateful to these Jacks and Jills that helped me to go up the hill while I was mastering the tricky English sounds! Even though the new sounds seemed quite natural and musical to me, taken all together in intricate designs of the little funny poems, they created an almost complete palette of the English phonetics. In addition, they also represented the first grammar forms and syntactic structures telling me how the English children, grown-ups and other fairy-tale characters live their life in Mother Goose Rhymes Land. More importantly, it illustrated how these characters were perceived and described by the English-speaking observer. The latter, an anonymous author of the rhymes, was perhaps the most central figure as it is from his perspective that we -- children from another linguistic and cultural background -- got the knowledge of the life adventures, routines, and absurdities of the Mother Goose rhymes Englishmen in its most general, often very ironic meaning:

Little Miss Muffet
Sat on a tuffet,
Eating of curds and whey;
There came a spider,
And sat down beside her,
And frightened Miss Muffet away.

While imagining this little Miss who was sitting on a tuffet, and how a spider spooked her away, I was practicing sounds [s], [t], [f] and simultaneously, was paying attention to the fact that some verbs had suffix *−ed* in the end, while others did not. The idea of regular and irregular verbs was as fun as the story itself -- it turned out that the English verbs could be naughty!

> Girls and boys, come out to play,
> The moon is shining as bright as day.
> Leave your supper, and leave your sleep,
> And come with your playfellows into the street.
> Come with a whoop, come with a call,
> Come with a good will or not at all.
> Up the ladder and down the wall,
> A halfpenny roll will serve us all.
> You find milk, and I'll find flour,
> And we'll have pudding in half an hour.

How many interesting things could be picked up from this little unpretentious poem! The English kids just like us have *playfellows* in the street; they call their evening meals *a supper;* their coin money includes a *halfpenny,* and they cook *pudding* from milk and flour. Moreover, words cease to just name things; rather, they begin to function like some moving pictures in Mother Goose rhymes. When you call for someone or invite him to play you just say *come. Come out to play.* That means when the two verbs are together the second can be used with *to.* When you need to cook something you first *find* the ingredients, like *milk* and *flour.* You can also come *with* something. From one poem which served to me as a picture born on the move of the rhyme and its rhythm, I could take so many useful forms and things which might otherwise come much drearier. Later, when the teacher explained the corresponding rules, they did not seem new

("*Come! Go! Listen! --- All the commands and requests, children, are called Imperative forms of the verb, you never use them with 'to',"*) because the preceding reciting practice had delightfully prepared me for faster acceptance of the grammar forms I already used in rhymes. I thought that English had the simplest grammar rules in the world. Grammar did come quite easy!

Chapter IV

Is that myself or someone else?

She said, "… I like you better in English."

----- Jean Zukowski/Faust

*… To pretend to be two people! Why, there's hardly enough of me left to make **one** respectable person! (p.19).*

Who am I then? Tell me that first, and then, if I like being that person, I'll come : if not, I'll stay down here till I'm somebody else. (p.26)

Perhaps, the most fascinating thing for me was to hear myself speaking English. It gave me a feeling of a new me in some imaginary context of reality, the reality of an English-speaking Tanya who was not Tanya any more but someone else, like Betty Smith, a schoolgirl from England, the main character of our first textbook stories. While I was reading about Betty, I was not only trying to imagine the real picture of her life, but

also to project myself to the circumstance she was living in. Speaking another language, imagining another life, comparing that virtual English girl with myself, or pretending to be her friend or even herself all created a very catching experience for me of **living** another life, of being somebody else. It was a game my imagination allured me into by shaping details of such penetration into the new context. It came quite spontaneously, almost unintentionally. It was just happening anytime when I was either reading stories from the textbooks or listening to the tapes attached to them. The most exhilarating part was **being** someone else. The quite common fact that children of age 7-8 would invent stories about themselves as characters of a different reality from books or their individual fantasy found a thrilling turn for me. The alternative reality originated from Mother Goose rhymes and Betty Smith's England during preparation for my English classes. I was imagining how I was eating an oatmeal porridge or bacon and eggs for my *English* breakfast; how I was taking a school bus as Betty was (there were no school buses in the Soviet Union); how I was drinking a five o'clock tea with my family and friends; how I was wearing a school uniform with the colors of my school (there were no other colors than brown and black for school uniforms in my town), and -- the most important – how I was speaking English the way Betty was. Giving credit to my first English textbooks, I can say that they made it really attractive through those series of short stories about Betty and her life accompanied by pictures. I was reading the stories and looking at the pictures of London with Big Ben and the Westminster Bridge, and it helped me to add more colors to my virtual presence in the English-speaking reality. I knew it had a different smell, taste, color and sound, just the way the English language did. As an invisible friend, I was feeding pigeons at the Trafalgar Square together with Betty, watching the changing the guards ceremony at the Buckingham Palace, listening to the birds singing in Hyde Park.

Alice tried to fancy to herself what such an extraordinary way of living would be like …it puzzled her too much…

My life in my virtual England was quite vivid and tangible in the sense of its impact on me. It was attractive because it existed parallel to my usual nothing extraordinary life, which I also liked but it was too habitual, too matter-of-fact. And more important, as in many of our daydreaming experiences, I almost never felt upset or rejected for any reason. I did not get poor marks for my Math class simply because I did not have any Math at all there! I did not experience troubles with peers, as it was only I and my friendly English guide - Betty Smith who was quite intelligent, reserved and considerate. I did not have to stay in the after school program doing homework for tomorrow's class, nothing like that! All unpleasant events were simply deleted from that self-constructed convenient reality. Positive emotions were the essence of it. Much later, trying to analyze why those childhood visions impressed me so deeply, I realized that it was a form of a getaway. It was as simple as that.

This seemed to Alice a good opportunity for making her escape; so she set off at once, and ran till she was quite tired and out of breath…

Schematic and trivial as it could only be, the image of Betty Smith situated in her Immaculate, yet hardly real, English textbook life, served for me as the background for an escape from a more challenging reality, the compulsions of which nearly every child tries to replace by some sweet fantasies. I transferred my admiration for English as a language to everything that was connected with English and Englishness. Pleasant, nice, ironic, sophisticated in its traditionalism and orderliness, purified and detached from the tarnish everyday duties, that Englishness gradually helped me to create an

alternative image of myself in that reality. Often quite careless and absent-minded, with a schoolbag resembling a dump of motley candy wrappers (*fantiki*) , pebbles, little glass balls, messy notebooks, paper clips, apple cores, pencil stumps, used erasers, sticky pieces of clay (*lipuchka*), bun crumbs, etc., I was a complete antipode to the neaty-neat, elegant, disciplined and organized Betty Smith. I lived in the small, provincial town of Tiraspol, while Betty found herself--- in huge and classy London. And again, it was not that I did not like my town and myself in it, it was that I just enjoyed another *me* living like Betty in London the way *she* did: in some refined dimension full of light and pleasant images, strikingly developed in its ability to refine my own senses. By all accounts, it appeared as both a conscious and unconscious search for some private imaginary space, free from painful rejection and unfortunate twists of circumstances anyone's daily life was usually so rich in. On the other hand, these travels in the alternative reality based on the images taken from my English classes, soon amalgamated into a new image of myself feeling so comfortable in that dream-like reality. Initially existing on the two separate planes, my new English self slowly but surely was becoming more alive, voluminously influencing my first reality. Once I caught myself copying Betty's ideal of a girl in my actual classes: I noticed while I was speaking English and working through the English assignments for my class, I was becoming more organized, reserved, self-confident and reliable. Was it a conscientious intention? It did not seem to be perceived as a result of those consistent travels of my mind into the nature of English and Englishness. It looked as if a non-existing reality, born by real activities, was progressively developing a sense of another personality in me. And that was quite real! It particularly was salient while I was using English. At the same time, it could easily fade away when I was speaking other languages. I liked the sense of being somebody else while preserving my main *self* across the languages I used and realities I situated myself in. Over the course of years, I noticed that I felt quite comfortable even when

crossing the virtual borderlines created by my imagination. Betty's refined features of a nice and self-possessed girl started overlapping with hyper-sensitivity, emotionality and volatility of my Russian-corresponding self. Interestingly, while living an English-speaking prototype of Betty, I was less emotional and changeable even while speaking and acting as Russian; whereas, when I was speaking English, I was more full-blooded and many-sided, curious and doubtful than a Betty-like type of a girl. It was very exciting to feel the mixture of both personalities because such a polytypic mode of self-awareness was more agreeable with my individual nature that ever resisted boredom, predictability and one-sidedness of life. I liked to be different, new and erratic – aspects that mainly rooted in my contradictory personality: I could be quite assertive as a leader of the group and yet quite vulnerable oftentimes. I could appear active, ever seeking for new people and impressions in life, and yet be fairly passive, sticking to the once-chosen patterns of behavior and a circle of pals. Much later, taking a course of psychology in the university, I found out that such a polymorphous personality type was called *ambivert,* and that was exactly how I really perceived myself. As a teenager I felt the hybridity of my nature even more acutely than as a child. I think that natural predisposition towards ambiguity made it possible for me to be so indulged in the pleasures of linguistic and cultural polyvalence. Cross-influences of the different, even polarized cultures (English and Russian), mentalities (Western and Eastern), and ideologies (Capitalist/ Communist) were not only organically represented in my daily living circumstance but became the background of that overwhelming personal duality I comfortably identified myself with. I adored Russian spirituality, often quite irrational and spontaneous, yet I enjoyed English omnipresent common sense and down-to-earth practicality. I was *here,* at home, in the reality of a cold war, an Iron Curtain, and the closed box of the Brezhnev's Soviet Union, and yet I was *there*, walking in the streets of London, listening to classic Beatles and glam-rocked Smokie. Any sign of a split

personality? None of the kind! As I mentioned before, both dimensions harmonically blended in me, making me feel quite complete, and – yes, thank God, - *diverse*! Now, asking myself how much of *me* remained in *me* after I had luck to encounter the English language and all the accompanied realia it brought with itself--I am not ready to answer yet. Perhaps, the answer to this question premises on the background I came from. I was brought up in the multilingual environment. Parents, relatives, teachers, doctors, friends, community service people who were filling up my living space across my growing years could usually speak more than one language, and quite often, more than two. Along with that, these languages -- Russian, Moldavian, Ukrainian, and Yiddish -- were never perceived as foreign because there were ***not*** foreign: They were used by us, people who shared one territory. I have to admit that in this respect Soviet Union as a state was a unique country in how it actualized its multinationality. Especially this refers to how people from very different ethnic backgrounds symbiotically fitted in the paradigm of one prescribed ideology. With an evident dominance of Russian in many places, other ethnicities were by and large preserving their languages, cultural habits and established practices. More so, these ethnicities vastly penetrated into the mentality of the monolingual Russian-speaking population through colorful idiomatic expressions, food and customs. Over the course of years, components of the shared realia like multi-colored threads of a big tapestry had blended into a mixture of a specific plural identity, which was called by the USSR ideological officials: the *Soviet people*. And I can state that it really existed. It certainly was revealed through some common ways of approaching the physical and social worlds (Goldfield, 1985). Living in a predominantly Russian-speaking part of Moldova, a Soviet Union republic located between Ukraine and Romania, we used Russian as lingua franca, speaking or at least understanding basic Moldavian and/or Ukrainian. There were Russian schools with a compulsory study of Moldavian and Moldavian/Ukrainian schools with compulsory

Russian. It came quite naturally and we took it for granted -- that was the way we lived since childhood. Therefore, these three main languages were not foreign for me by any means. The touch of the tapestry-woven hybridity was present everywhere, almost imperceptible in its genuine naturalness. Conversely, such languages as English, French and German were foreign because they were not used where we lived. We learned about them only from books and newspapers. Yes, they were taught at schools, but they were part of something else, part of the bigger (capitalist!) world beyond the borders of our eclectic, isolated Soviet reality. I think the fact that English was from far beyond added much flavor of some hidden, almost mythological realty to its context which became even more legendary when as a teenager I started listening to the records of English and American pop and rock bands. As an attribute of the forbidden, unknown, criticized and thus, very attractive realm, English was twice as much interesting for me than any other language. No wonder that in the long run my hybrid self has acquired a thick layer of that strongly felt affiliation to the Englishness, with almost the same depth of attachment to the first languages I used as a child and adolescent. Mostly it rooted in 1) my interest and comfort in out-of-the ordinary, polymorphous realities, 2) contradictions of my nature calling for a diversity of self-expression and life experiences to feel complete, and 3) my readiness to accept a variety of linguistic and other social practices as a given, based on the pluralism derived from the concept of the *Soviet people's* identity.

Chapter V

Miracles and disasters: Needles and pins of the real language context

Pins and needles: A sharp tingling sensation from lack of

circulation.

(Webster's on-line Dictionary, 2008, para.1).

There was a dead silence instantly, and

Alice thought to herself," I wonder what they

will *do next! If they had any sense they'd*

take the roof off" (p.79).

Perhaps the previous reflections on my English learning experience can leave an impression of the perfectly smooth enterprise. And it was like that through my school and university years. But it was not a victory march all the time. The main needles and pins started much later, triggered by the two main events: My immigration to Canada and the writing assignment for my first graduate course at the Canadian university.

In my euphorically constructed attitude towards English, there was no space for any rejections and conflicts. I was not ready to realize one day that I was tenaciously trapped in my illusions regarding immigration. Attraction to the Englishness created a strong view in my mind that no matter which English-speaking country I went to for living, I would find my home there for several simple reasons: I know English, I love it, I have a degree in teaching it; thus, I will be protected by my knowledge of it. It appeared that I quite exaggerated the extent of my assuredness in all of the above. A mere fact that English had become the love of my life and even the source of my daily bread did not entail the immediate conclusive success.

In another moment Alice was through the glass, and had jumped lightly down into

the Looking Glass room…Then she began looking about and noticed that what could

be seen from the old room was quite common and uninteresting, but that all the rest

was as different as possible.

Once my Junior School history teacher told us a story of how Lenin and

Krupskaya, his wife, experienced a shock when after many years of learning English

and actually reading freely the English writers, they finally came to London to realize

that they could not understand a single word while talking to people. That was a

consequence of an EFL learning context – it happens when the learners study language

from books or teachers who in their own turn have never been to the country of the

target language. As a result, learners feel completely lost because the language they

were taught previously is not exactly the one people actually use. It was funny to hear

that story in the history class. It was not funny when it happened to me, though. On

coming to Canada from the very first contacts with the local population, I understood the

degree of such false confidence regarding my command of conversational English.

Here I will cite myself, because I probably cannot express it better than I already did

before:

> You understand that the English you studied at home has so little in common with
>
> the one you heard in the streets. The words that you used, the ones so carefully
>
> retrieved from textbooks and dictionaries, made people look at you with surprise.
>
> You speak – and no one understands; you listen – and you don't understand
>
> anyone. It seems like you are completely disconnected from the environment. That
>
> is **tough**. That **is** tough. (Galetcaia, 2007, p.7).

I described here my disturbing experience of being disconnected from the much

awaited, genuine English-speaking environment. It was not a pleasant journey to the

Betty-Smith-fairyland of my childhood anymore. It was not. It exactly resembled the

physical condition of being cut off from oxygen. No more circulation: Your

communication with the world is disrupted by numerous gaps in mispronounced or

misheard sounds, misdirected or misinterpreted meanings, disregarded messages and disrespected concerns.

Alice thought: "Oh, dear, what nonsense I am talking!"

Trying to fit in the context, you almost learn English anew; you almost forget your pure, perfect, bookish English, putting more efforts into slavish imitation of the local English-speakers who this time come not from the polished London linguaphone courses. The English from government agents, bus drivers, grocery cashiers, kids and seniors astonish you with their striking differences that are hugely dissonant to the English you have been taught at home. You lose the sense that it is *your* English because now it belongs to *them*. Next, you lose yourself in that strange English- speaking environment, when *your* image of a comfortable use of *your* English is breathtakingly vanishing. You drift into a murky limbo of your attempts to return to the afore-confident state of mind that you know things. Remarks like "*Oh, it is that what your mean!*" act like a slap in your face because they leave you with a feeling of complete and miserable inadequacy. It is the situation when you start to separate the world into *me* and *them*. Why? Because they look at you as the *other*, and even if they look at you in a friendly manner, they still treat you as the *other*, a person from another country, another cultural background and, Oh my God, how unpleasant is that! You feel quite excluded from their reality. It seemed as if there were no room for you here. As if you were not planned…

No room! No room! they cried out when they saw Alice coming…

Soon you feel that,

> Acting as messenger of a certain culture often washes away your
> personalized view: the way how you perceive yourself and how others
> perceive you. On the hundredth time of answering what that strange accent
> you might vocalize and in what part of the world that unknown funny name of

your country might happen to be, you become almost physically sick. You are

tired. You feel lonely. You sense yourself as a walking museum exhibit.

(Galetcaia, 2007, p.7)

"You ought to be ashamed of yourself," said Alice. "A great girl like you, (she might well

say this), to go on crying in this way! Stop this moment, I tell you!" But she went on all

the same, shedding the gallons of tears, until there was a large pool all around her"…

The cherished miracle you were so lovingly preparing yourself for suddenly disappears

without a trace, and you lose all the reasons for optimism. The normal reaction to the

world that stole your hopes ranges from among surprise, anger, hatred, disillusion, and,

finally strong resistance to the aggressive medium. Of course, it is mostly aggressive in

your mind. It is not that people attack you. It is your false perception about certain things

in the target environment that is attacking you. It is the purified and distilled wonderland

of Betty Smith with its amusing unreality whose pleasures and absurdities suddenly stop

being funny and entertaining. Now it was opening its negative, or rather full-sized view,

not giving you much time to take a deep breath and adjust to its new frightening image.

Alice never could quite make it out, in thinking it over afterwards, how it was that they

began: all she remembers is, that they were running hand in hand, an the Queen went

so fast that is was all she could do to keep up with her: and still the Queen kept crying

"Faster! Faster!" but Alice felt she **could not** *go faster, though she had no breath left to*

say so. …. Not that Alice had any idea of doing that. She felt as if she would never be

able to talk again, she was getting so much out of breath: and still the Queen was crying

"Faster! Faster!" And dragged her along.

There was hardly any rest indeed from that gloomy, bitter feeling of disappointment and loss. Miracles, promised to myself and felt actually in the imaginary Englishland, did not wait for me anymore. They just did not happen. Not that Canada was a bad place. It was simply not my Wonderland. Yet. Hopefully- yet. Rather it was that side behind the looking glass ever hidden by my egoistic mind and, thus, not desired or expected to be there. People reflected through that side of the looking glass *were* different. They smiled but that smile did not warm you up. They talked but their talk did not mean much to you. They acted as if all of them were characters from some strange fiction, unpredictable, yes, but not in the pleasant way of the unpredictability I ever was wishing for. Rather, their unpredictability was so awfully weird that you could hardly cope with it. Their unpredictability was so annoying and frightening that you failed to evaluate what was going wrong and why, applying the patterns of habitual formal logic. When you are open to them, they immediately close up. When you shut yourself down, they are remarkably nice. You want their company and they disappear. You want them not and they come seeking your presence.

"Did you say pig or fig?" said the Cat.

"I said "pig," replied Alice; "and I wish you couldn't keep appearing and vanishing so suddenly: you make one quite giddy."

"All right," said the Cat; and this time it vanished quite slowly, beginning with the end of the tail, and ending with the grin, which remained sometime after the rest of it had gone..

<div align="center">*   *   *</div>

'Have some wine,' the March Hare said in an encouraging tone. Alice looked all around the table, but there was nothing on it but tea.

' I don't see any wine,' she remarked.

'There isn't any,' said the March Hare.

'Then it wasn't very civil of you to offeri,t', said Alice angrily.

'It wasn't very civil of you to sit down without being invited, said the March Hare.

*'I didn't know it was **your** table,' said Alice, 'it's laid for a great many more than three. '*

'Your hair need cutting,' said the Hatter. He had been looking at Alice for some time with great curiosity, and this was his first speech.

A non-stop freezing shower of the upside-down-like manners of hosts can really get to you despite your previous admiration for the Englishland absurdities. What fun was to imagine an Old Lady of Chertsey,

Who made a remarkable curtsey;

She twirled round and round,

Till she sunk underground,

Which distressed all the people of Chertsey; or an Old Man of the West,

      Who wore a pale plum-coloured vest;

      When they said, 'Does it fit?'

      He replied, 'Not a bit!'

     That uneasy Old Man of the West!

These dazzling nonsensical words were equally foolish and simple-hearted. They did not evoke in me as a reader any hard feelings on encountering those self-annulling heroes and heroines. On a deeper psychological level, they presumably satisfy the inner human quickness to rather laugh at someone else than herself. With that you never think of how real your encounters can actually be with some characters like these. More objectively, and that will bring even more pain and frustration, you perhaps look or act in their eyes exactly as they do in yours: laughable and uncanny. Once, smiling through my tears, I even thought of myself as a limerick character:

There was a funny girl from Moldova

Who was dreaming about the wonderland over and over

Once she got to that land

Not a day she could stand

And she guessed she's just nothing but a rover…

With all that, the new environment created some atmosphere of unexpected yet exciting adventure, when your feelings are cyclically emerging in an exhausting sinusoid of hilarious ups and crashing downs, adding to your existence some flavour of dynamic, almost dream-like reality.

"It was much pleasanter at home", "thought poor Alice. .. I almost wish I hadn't gone down that rabbit hole- and yet—and yet—it's rather curious, you know, this sort of life! I do wonder what can have happened to me! When I used to read fairy- tales, I fancied that kind of thing never happened, and now here I am in the middle of one!

* * *

The state of my mind when I was too much absorbed by my own performance suddenly bridged me to the idea expressed by Piaget described in Merleau-Ponty, (1973), regarding the child's speech development. Exactly as the child believes that her thoughts and sentiments are universal, so does the second language learner when she deals with the events related to her language competence. Similar to how the child egocentrically creates the meaning of the objects of the world and focuses solely on **her** reaction to them, the second language learner creates her vision of the new linguistic reality not thinking much about the reactions of the others. The learner, like the child, does not imagine the presence of others in this reality especially that they are there to

judge her competence of expression. As Merleau-Ponty (1973) posed, "The child is possessed by language, more than he possesses it. Thus, he is less closed in on himself than the adult, who, knowing how to conduct in the presence of other individuals, really tries to communicate with them and thinks in terms of other people even when he is alone." (p.54). Analogically, the language learner is so obsessed with the forms of the language she is still mastering that her personal perceptions of how it relates to the others do not really count much. A learner's concentration on the language and its forms, on one hand, and the cognitive and affective responses such an enterprise requires from or evokes in her, on the other, often completely grasps her attention. It can happen then that one of the important figures of the whole undertaking, the interlocutor -- for whom that language is not actually the matter of an intricate intellectual game -- is suddenly completely deleted. Called by Merleau-Ponty (1973) "the departure outside of oneself," the process the child needs to surpass the egocentrism of her perceptions cries for the conscious modification of the relationship between self and others. Otherwise, the child will be constantly on the stage of "the collective monologue" when two or more children trying to be engaged in the dialogue are actually only pursuing their own monologues, not paying attention to the reaction of the others. I caught myself in a similar situation, occurring when my "collective monologues" with native speakers were non-effective because I did not expect any troublesome scenario. I was too much focused on my part, whereas the answers from the interlocutors were usually expected in the form of generalized one-sided brief responses as if taken straight from my textbook drills. This communicative pattern cried for the modification, or *departure* from my idealistic vision of *me* speaking *my* English to the abstract, non-existent, rather averaged schematic interlocutor. Too much attention to the once-learned formulas, supposedly accounting for guaranteed success, had distracted me from using English as a tool to decipher other people's thoughts. Bitter as

it was, I started to understand how imaginary my perceptions of English and the context of its real use had previously been. At that point I became conscious of how I had overly underestimated that "to learn to speak is to coexist more and more with the environment. Living in this environment incites.. [the learner]… to recapture language and thought for his own means" (Merleau-Ponty, 1973, p.50). Quite unexpectedly, that obvious axiom required much more time to be comprehended than I could ever think of.

* * *

…The harness of otherness fixes you tight. It will take months and years to get rid of the initial despair, and most probably, to kiss not two but dozens of frogs before you bring yourself back to the normal state of mind. Or being a frog yourself until you start understanding *them* better. Not a very soothing thing to do!

Another horrible experience was waiting for me when I tried writing academic English, preparing a critical review for the first of my graduate courses. It was a nightmarish experience, indeed, as it finished off my certainty about 1) my ability to further analyze the hosts' behaviour, and 2) the adequacy of my English writing expertise. The absurdities here began right at once: when I was talking in class, discussing the issues related to the course, the professor usually found my participation quite good and even very impressive, but when I used almost the same vocabulary and style in the first course paper, red questions on the margins accompanied by the comments *unclear* or *it does not make any sense*, literally nailed me down, minimizing my self-esteem to null.

"Leave off that!" screamed the Queen. "You make me giddy."

Why did it happen? Well, because those linguistic means of expression obviously made sense in class, and they made sense for me when I wrote. Nonetheless, for some mysterious reason, when I put them on paper, there you go—pop! --- they stopped to make sense any more!!!

The Caterpillar and Alice looked at each other for some time in silence: at last the Caterpillar took the hookah out of his mouth and addressed her in a languid, sleepy voice.

*'You !' said the Caterpillar contemptuously.' Who are you?' Which brought them back again to the beginning of the conversation, Alice felt a little irritated at the Caterpillar's such very short remarks, and she drew herself up and said, very gravely, "I think you ought to tell me who **you** are first.'*

'Why?' said the Caterpillar .

Here was another puzzling question, and as Alice could not think of any good reason, and as the Caterpillar seemed to be in a very unpleasant state of mind, she turned away.

"Come back!" the Caterpillar called after her. "I've something important to say!"

This sounded promising, certainly: Alice turned and come back again.

"Keep your temper," said the Caterpillar.

"Is that all?" said Alice, swallowing down her anger as well as she could.

"No," said the Caterpillar. … For some minutes it puffed away without speaking…

It took me many months of scrupulous analytical work and desperate seek for truth asking opinion of different native speakers to come to understanding what was going on.

"The first thing I've got to do, said Alice to herself, as she wandered about the in the wood is to grow to my right size again, and the second thing is to find my way into this lovely garden. I think that will be the best plan."

As usual, the causes of that phenomenon were rooted in many factors, both objective and subjective. Most commonly, the sour result might happen because of: 1) the shift of concentration from the way of expression to the content, dramatically distracting the writer's attention; 2) the idea that grammar and syntax forms are much to the extent universal in all the languages, pushing the writer to copy L1s structures almost exactly, thus delivering the sentences that do not make sense for the English reader. (In fact, the learner bases the construction of the meaning in writing mostly on her L1. When I was thinking on how to express my ideas related to some mind-cracking academic article, I would think about it in Russian, consequently I would make up sentences and use vocabulary literally copied from my Russian expression of the phrase) and 3) The patterns of academic expression could be (and in reality largely are) very different across languages and academies: what is considered acceptable and even necessary in the home academy can be completely unacceptable and inadequate for the host one. The learner literally has to forget what she has been taught before and start anew. When I was analyzing the reasons for my first failure, I felt much better; the final diagnosis of the problems did not seem absolutely personal any more, and it gave me more confidence to start again. It worked! It was not perfect by any means, but at least I got the comments diminishing my sense of respected self much more rarely. What did I do? I stopped thinking in Russian when writing in English. I mean, I nearly stopped doing that. It sounded quite petrifying first, and rather harsh (almost like killing your sense of the Russian self?!), but then I discovered I could live with it. Moreover, little by little, my feelings ranged from hatred of and resistance to the style I had to imitate, to

the interest and joy of pretending I knew only English. My egoistic Russian-speaking self had been cornered for the sake of the reader's benefit. The one who always wishes to express itself the way it likes, forgetting about the reader (you did not get it- it's your problem!) was put temporarily on hold. All of a sudden, I started to love it. I wilfully jumped over initial pride and enormous resistance of my ego to dance to the English-speaking reader's tune and it helped. Since that time, instead of treating English only as a lovely way to be different, I put its function of my self-representation on the equal level with Russian. From that moment, I employed English to *diversify* myself on much reasonable level because it was one thing to think in Russian and speak English along the way, and quite another to think and simultaneously reproduce it through speaking and writing in English. It was fun!

Not forgetting about the subjective reasons for discrepancies in the way in which you as an ESL learner write and how the English-speaking reader sees your writing, I investigated this aspect as well. I asked one of my Canadian friends, a former Winnipeg Free Press journalist, to read my critical review and tell me if she understood my ideas. She said, yes, they made a good sense to her, but she would edit them in a certain way to make them more appealing for her native speaker's eye. So she did. The funniest thing came later when I showed the revised copy to my professor and -- guess what happened -- she still said she could not make any sense of it. That was a moment of my triumph. I understood it was not only *"constraints of your English proficiency"* - the comment I got from her for the first submitted copy. It was now the *constraints of her approach* to viewing students' papers that had nailed me so harshly down.

Oh, you foolish Alice! She answered to herself. "How can you learn lessons in here? Why, there's hardly room for you, and no room at all for any lesson-books!"

Some time later, I learned that she was an editor of a high-browed professional journal, and once, when she spoke about the criteria of how they evaluated manuscripts the future authors offered them for the journal to publish, I understood that I as well as many other students did not have a chance of winning that game. I read her articles and got the idea of what was happening: She was expecting, perhaps both consciously and unconsciously, her own pattern and style of writing, the only one that had apparently the right to exist. The ideas did not matter much. Upon analysis, her style was very boring as compared to the other academic authors, and it seemed to lack the most important component of the efficient writing – awareness of the reader, who wants not only to be informed but also "entertained" in the highest sense of this word. That is to say, not "entertained" in the form of a circus-like entertainment, but in the form of appealing to all of the reader's senses when ideas, words and structures used by the author make the reader metaphorically fly, lifted up by the harmony of all of them taken together.

Eventually, I discovered an insight that allowed me to proceed with my attempts to write better: I now understood that the twists of subjectivity of one high-browed reader's expectations regarding the certain style of expression did not necessarily mean the inferiority of the writer. Perhaps, you just did not please that particular reader, which means you can still go ahead. I think that the factor of subjectivity, most contradictory in its essence, still plays a very positive role as a criterion for the effectiveness of one's writing. Okay, that reader did not get you, so try another one, and another, and in case you see that all of them are not satisfied – that will indicate it is you, my dear, this time, not them. In the case of my academic writing for graduate courses, luckily, very soon I found out that not all the professors misunderstood or disliked the way I wrote. It gave me much encouragement and energy to work further on improvement.

In sum, I cannot say that finally all my disasters turned into miracles, but due to the situations I described above, I felt much more complete both as a learner and a

person. As a learner I knew how harmful it was to overestimate your successes, how important it was to analyze inevitable failures, and how vital it was to diagnose the problems, finding the strategies to treat them. As a person, I understood that sometimes when I over-generalize someone's specific expertise by applying it to my personal performance, it does me a huge disservice, resulting in false conclusions about my abilities and directions to further choose. I accepted my lesson that no matter how enthusiastically happy you might feel about the language learning, you should be prepared for the inevitable situations when everything turns upside down and inside out. You should not be too quick to admit that something wrong is with you ---it is just the part of the process.

From the point of view of developing my multidimensional self, both immigration and academic writing experiences have still left me with the same compelling question: Who am I when I use this or that language? Adapting to the host culture's puzzling incongruence as well as learning how to write the way *they* will understand me, or at least say that they do, adds to the formation of some corresponding patterns of my mind. Intellectually, yes, it's quite logical to refer to the things the way the addressees refer to them to in order to be adequately accepted. Emotionally, well, here's the difference: When acting like *them,* I just have to switch off some of my usual affective modes; I have to become more superficial, more transcendent and more impersonal when dealing with *them*. That is not typical of me, of that part of the self that I essentially attach to my primary linguistic and cultural paradigms. I am saying, "Have a nice day," and feel how awfully artificial it sounds for that part of myself, who would never use that clichéd worn-out phrase with the best friend, for instance. Well, they do it; it is natural for *them. When I say it, it is not me, but another version of myself, who suffers bitterly inside from the artificiality of that use.* Why do I use it then? Because I have to be accepted. I have to correspond to certain expectations. I don't want any surprised looks

anymore -- it hurts. I want to breathe freely with enough oxygen. I have to use the language *they* speak, not the one I learned *the way I learned it.* On the positive side, I like to sound adequate, and I liked when *they* say something good about my performance in the role of *them.* It is nice to be included. The criteria of the acceptance are, paradoxically, both very subtle and harsh, and also they vary across individuals. For some, if you speak with an accent or use not the exact word they expect from you in some specific situation, you will be momentarily outcast by their suspicious look or slighting tone of response. For others, no matter what and how you say, they just want to get it, to communicate. So, it is not the language proficiency-based acceptance, then? Perhaps, it falls into the category of a psychological compatibility type-of-acceptance during any communication, even within the first language? Perhaps, yes, and yet in the new language context it becomes more significant, and thus painful in case of its non-acceptance version.

Overall, the disasters related to the adaptation to the new environment extensively overpowered all my initial doubts. To be more exact, my doubts, which at first seemed huge, were eventually made to feel small in comparison to the frustration coming later. To say I was lost is to say nothing; even if I was lying to myself that I was not, I knew I was. There were moments when I wanted to run away from that reality that was completely strange and oftentimes illogical to me. There was only one way to survive: To preserve who you were and then to develop a new part of myself that could resist the ego's impetuous fall. It requires some more patience on bad days, and more tolerance to the outcomes completely unplanned. That path is of hardest. I am still on it now. Sometimes running eagerly, sometimes lying right in the middle, blocking my own run. I know that it is too much of a luxury to be drawn to your own personal drama for too long. To please your egoistic sentiments of blaming someone else for your concerns is too selfish and -- most importantly -- not helpful. I know that after some time the self-

engaging accumulation of hard feelings of inferiority will be suddenly transformed into the push forward. It depends on how soon I will return to the ability of convincing myself to move along beyond any reasonable doubt.

Chapter VI

The measure of all things

I'll walk where my own nature would be leading…

---- Emily Bronte

Silently, invisibly…

----- William Blake

The more I reflect on myself seeking *my*-self in the English-speaking world, the more open-ended the journey seems to be. I started this story trying to recollect the experiences I went through for answering the questions ever challenging my mind. Quite tritely, I am finishing this narrative with more questions than answers. Or is it the usual end of all quests for truth? A thought not comforting at all. Where does the "I" begin and where does it finish? What is "I" as a composite figure of reality other than just a sparkle of the individualised intricate flow of conscious and unconscious? How does a language other than someone's' mother tongue, the one which introduces the world to the 'I' and "I" to the world, constitute its unique reality? How does it transform its essence into the verbal code connecting the "I" to the other forms of existence? If the mother tongue makes the "essence of "I", what does the new language (-es) do with it? Do they expand its virtual presence in the world? Or quite oppositely, limit its freedom of self-representation? Or both? Is there an English part of myself that reflects the essence of the Englishness in me? To a certain extent, yes, I definitely sense the presence of some symbolic meaning my inner self attaches to the notion of Englishness, mostly associated with a more pronounced orderliness, practicality, composure and adherence

to the rules and clichéd life standards. It exists subtly somewhere between the brink of conscious and unconscious in my acceptance of the English language with everything this language embodies. It exposes itself *silently, invisibly,* inexplicably to the others, and yet quite persistently in my mind. Somehow it blends together the concept and qualities of my *self* emerged out of the first language shaped in the childhood. Rebellious, seeking change and ever contradictory, my sense of self extends the variability of its qualities turning me into a less disobedient, less unsettled, less scattered type of a person when I use English. The symbolic features of the Englishness perceived through my learning experiences opened that new dimension of me. Thus, the relationship between what I do and who I am quite unexpectedly found its transformative value. My evolving journey has opened a new door. But the door to where? To the maze? The more I think about my existence in the different modes of reality shaped by the languages I use, the more evasive becomes the path to full comprehension of what is happening.

Can I make *at least one respectable person* of myself now? I still find myself wondering over these questions, sometimes feeling as if I were almost touching upon the answer. And there are times when the answers are sneaking off like the capricious guests who take the French leave because they do not want to disappoint the host. To say that I am comfortable with the liminal state of my mind will not be quite true, as well as to say that I am uncomfortable with it. I can change with the language I use because I need to match its nature, and yet I am the same in the core of my personality. By all accounts, it turned out that my ego tolerated these ambiguities, curious and venturesome; it was selfishly drawing energy from the variety of sources to satisfy its eternal need to know and feel more.

At any other time, Alice would have felt surprised at this, but she was far too much

excited to be surprised at anything now..

Just at this moment Alice felt a very curious sensation, which puzzled her a good deal

until she made out what it was: she was beginning to grow larger again.

Nonetheless, I often feel an identity crisis just like an anxious teenager facing the harshness of the world because I do not know how my mind makes me able, functioning multilingually. I do not know where one part of myself is replaced by another, or if they co-exist on some separate yet intertwined planes?

I am confidently sure, however, that learning English has definitely become a stimulus for my personal growth. At first, it was more like a game, expanding and thrilling my imagination. Then, it turned into an almost existentialistic challenge, providing me with a wide range of intense emotions, which in the long run added so many dimensions to my personality. My encounters with English bestowed the philosophical questioning of measuring the things on me, and in the first place, measuring the measure of all: The essence of myself. Rethinking of who I am and what I am doing and why happened largely in the events occurring in the reference to my English learning, teaching, speaking, writing, absorbing the nature of the language which is always both familiar and new to me. Undeniably, negotiation of my identity is much framed by the use of that language.

Reviewing my life's experiences related to English learning, I am revisiting my personal framework of perceived transformative processes my inner self underwent, adjusting to the various roles it took along the way. A full range of feelings, embracing excitement and joy on one hand and denial and resistance on the other, made this way essentially alive. I mean "essentially" in its literal meaning, in that it exposes the shades

of my personal essence. Rewording Lacan (cited in Ragland-Sullivan & Bracher, 1991) I can say that the concept of narration is not only reordering of the meaning of one's life, transforming it from meaningless to meaningful. For me, it is transforming the meaningful events of my life into evidence of some advantageous development within myself that helps me to clarify personal values and beliefs. It is the attempt of some internal verification of the causes that evoke such development. The ups and downs I experienced through the English language learning did not make a super hero out of me. I am still quite vulnerable as a language learner and user. The introspective journey, searching where I belong through the languages I learn, helped me to better know myself. Ultimately, due to such an evolving engagement, I explored the exterior diversity of the different cultures deeper, trying to find the interior connections between them. I think it lead me to a deeper understanding of what Jung (1970) called *collective unconscious*. Being in some evident conflict on the surface of my *socio-cultural self*, the differences in the cultures brought a substantial extension of my *transcultural-existential self* (Ishiyama, 1993) to the degree I even did not expect: I feel much more solidarity now with the other language learners and multilingual users than before. I am also more tolerant to the perceptions of monolinguals that I viewed as quite limited in their ability to relate to multilingual contexts. In a word, I became more open to the ambiguities that now would not threaten the sense of my *solid self*. As a result, I feel more predisposed to explore and possibly accept the values attached to the specific ethnicities other than my own. It feels as if the defensive function of my ego had been transformed into a more sophisticated plane of self- protectiveness, now in the form of an open-minded investigation rather than one-sided judgment and/or rejection. As a result, the meaning of my existence became more diverse and determined in its striving for understanding the world around me. Looking inside myself taught me to embrace my own imperfections and delusions. Paradoxically, it contributed even more to the sense

of my completeness. I still don't know exactly who I am but it does not bear any shade of inner insecurity ---the circle of my personal search has reached its spiral turn definitely on a much higher level.

*   *   *

Similarly to how we relate to the other human being, we relate to the new language: we can be primarily impressed by it in a positive or negative way; we can be fascinated by it or completely appalled; we can wish to know it better and increase our time with it, or we would want to cut off our contacts as much as possible. We can like it or dislike its presence in our life. In its turn, the new language can either disclose its secrets to us, unlocking the doors to many other exciting avenues, or shut down our communication with the culture it represents. We can fight. It can be killing us. We can help each other. It can give us strength. We can be friends or enemies. In a word, we live through languages we speak in the same fashion as languages keep on living through us.

….In closing, I can say that I have been very lucky with English. The first time I heard the first English words it made my heart skip a beat. This language captured my imagination, stirred up my best feelings and turned my life into a fascinating journey of rediscovering of who I am and who else I can be. Seeing the world through the looking glass of my English-speaking self has become one of the most meaningful things that happened to me. What a wonderful dream it had been….

"Oh, I've had such a curious dream!", said Alice, and she told her sister as well as she could remember them about all the strange Adventures of hers that you have just been reading about… Alice got up and ran off, thinking while she ran as well as she might, what a wonderful dream it had been…

Narratives: Discussion

On the surface, the themes emerged in the narratives come in the same context as they do in interviews. The difference is mostly about the order of the themes as they appear and the intensity of the stance: narratives are much more emotional and introverted. The latter is another category that strikes me with the reversed meaning of its nominal quality: the more introverted the writer can be the more extroverted plane her personal evidence will acquire. The more you can look deep inside yourself, or in other words, be introvertly focused on personal by divulging it, the more it cracks open to the others to see. The more they see it, the more it will belong to them as well- and is it not then an extrovert fashion of communicating with the world? Being totally open?. In the most general view, both writers share their sense of feeling quite different about themselves contacting with another language and its culture. The impact of such interference into the sanctum of their *selves* disturbed by this presence seems strongly individualised. It quite resonated with the previous observation that the reactions to such interference vary across individuals. The study narratives prove it, demonstrating how learning of the same language can invoke quite opposite responses in learners: what seems to be an enjoyable experience to one author of the narrative can seem quite a disturbing enterprise to another. It should be noted though that there are more similarities in the way how the unfamiliar cultural environment impacts different learners than in the way how the language does. It confirms the view that "individuals experience identity, security, and emotional safety in a culturally familiar environment. In contrast, in a culturally unfamiliar environment, individuals may experience identity vulnerability or insecurity because of a perceived threat or fear (Blackledge & Pavlenko , 2001, p.244). Not surprisingly, the learners' reactions to the unfamiliar environment, especially the

initial ones, have much in common: same insecurity, discomfort and loneliness.

Generally speaking, the themes of the narratives relate to learners' perceptions on

learning and use of English, and the contacts with the host culture.

Themes

1) Individual emotional response to language learning experiences

2) Role of symbolic of the new language

3) Awareness of transformative influence on perception of the self

4) Contacts with host culture: Essentialization of otherness

5) Development of the defence: strategies of personal adjustment

Individual emotional response

> *I have thought it through a hundred times. I can*
>
> *be as logical as hell, but I am also highly*
>
> *emotional, obviously.*

-------James Patterson

Both narratives are emotionally abundant. It can be said that high emotionality

works as a formative canvas for each piece. The first encounter with English in "Alice"

and in Esther's journal is vividly telling how that event affectively evolved both narrators.

Deep as they are, feelings of both learners are often diametrically opposed, though:

Alice's[2] excitement vs. Esther's confusion and Alice's acceptance of ambiguities vs.

Esther's rejection of such are most salient. Even describing her feeling of being lost in

the new world on encountering its ambiguities, Alice tries not to lose ground under her

feet. She chooses to uncover the reasons for why that world is so strikingly different,

and by doing so tries to understand its right to be different. Esther's bitterness on seeing the differences seems to be more of an unresolved kind of----what–can-I-do-with-it-type – disappointment ---- I just deny it as it does not fit to my view of the world. Even the reasons behind writing a personal story are quite opposite: Alice wanted to share her joy of living through learning English; while Esther started her reflective notes as a response to the intense inner struggle she experienced taking a language program. As she says, *"I am.. . learning how to write academically, and living personal conflicts…After twenty-nine years writing in Portuguese, my first language, I need to know how to write in English. Sometimes I ask myself what teachers are teaching me..…English learning has changed not only my view about writing but about my personality."* (Narrative E[3], p.105). From the very first line she shows to the reader that her learning experience is a cause of conflict, and that the language learning teaches her more about herself than just rules of academic writing. The presence of a deep inner conflict is felt immediately in Esther's journal, and that stance will dominate till the end. She calls paragraphs that she has to write in the academic writing course *ghosts that bother* [her] *during the nights.* She says that she does not know how to express herself in English and that makes her feel so limited, restricted. The mixture of feelings she lives so intensively through are *fear, panic, tiredness.* Trying to identify the problem, she mentions," *The problem is …I don't know how to express my ideas using English language. Sometimes I hear internal voices saying that the real problem is …I don't want to change my way to write. In other moments, I can hear internal voices saying that the main problem is ----I can't change my personality. I am confused. I don't have confidence to wrote or even open my mind to learn a new language naturally".* (Narrative E, p.106).Esther's main complaint is that as a person who likes to use ten words instead of three when trying to say something, she feels that she is automatically

restricted in English in her right to be the way she is – highly emotionally charged and verbose. She can not understand why it is regarded negative. On hearing that verbosity, redundancy and repetition are generally considered as attributions of poor writing style in English, she feels how awkward she sounds. Although, her call for help is not obvious, when she asks" *Can somebody imagine how I feel?"* (Narrative E, p.105), it can not but make any reader certain about how desperate the situation seems to her. Quite oppositely, the opening chapters of "Alice" are full of light-coloured reminiscences of the author's childhood impressions on how wonderfully she started to relate to the verbal and culturally symbolic attributes of English. Her extremely positive feelings are based on several factors: early age, life in a multicultural context, reputation of English as a language of some hidden and forbidden reality, and personal curiosity towards different modes of self-expression. If Esther looks at English as an agency limiting her self- expression, Alice takes it as an exciting way to diversify representations of herself communicating with the world as well as the ways she can use to describe the world to herself. Such binary nature of her contacts with English makes the basis of the further continuous investigation of this language and its role in her life. Using her fairy-tale prototype's funny adjectives, Alice writes, "*The world began to expand curiouser and curiouser, and as a result of that expansion I was also opening like the largest telescope that ever was!"* (Narrative A, p.117). Definitely, English works as a catalyst for self-expansion for Alice. Polarizing emotions demonstrated by Alice and Esther regarding how English influences the perceptions of themselves, both authors are startlingly similar when describing the struggles related to either speaking English to the hosts or writing in English. Here, I see almost identical theme of complete confusion and anxiety resulting in feeling of inadequacy, followed by low-esteem and insecurity. Both Alice and Esther find it difficult to identify the problem: who or what is wrong, they or the language they try to use to express themselves in English. For both of them it appears

almost impossible to adjust their personalities, their *Selves,* which keep on talking or writing in their first languages. Esther openly states that she hates this experience. Alice says she feels much less confident than when she was learning it before, and very frustrated. She is also afraid to lose her sense of self when she uses English in the natural context not in the "safe" atmosphere of classroom, "*When I say it, it is not me, but another version of myself, who suffers bitterly inside from the artificiality of that use*" (Narrative A, p.143). For Esther the whole idea of even talking in a foreign language is associated with some unnatural action when she does not feel like her normal self: "*To speak some English words it is supposed to move my mouth differently…..I feel an artificial person if I do that*" (Narrative E, p.110). Both authors despite the mostly contrasting responses to English as an implement for self-expression coalesce in calling English learning a dramatically challenging event; with that Esther colors her challenge more tenebrously, while Alice- invitingly, moving steadily forward to the positive outcome.

Role of symbolic of the new language

This theme emerges mostly in Alice's story in its actual representation: she directly articulates the influence of the symbolism of English and Englishness on her sense of self. Esther does not talk about symbolism of the new language; however through the descriptions of what she had to go through, or rather what she had to sacrifice, the image of English as the representative agency for Canadian culture gets it distinct profile: formal, strict, cold, succinct. She does not use these words but obviously imply them by asking how to make her writing expression less verbose, emotional and informal. For Esther contacts with the symbolic of English are perceived as something disintegrating her sense of comfort and warmth Portuguese has in store for her. Forms

and styles prescribed by the conventions of English writing give the impression of traps with limited space and no place for imagination. Subjectivity, typical of Esther's usual style, is rejected and she immediately feels that it is her, not the style that is actually rejected. An inability to freely exist in the stern frames of English writing is transferred to the personal domain. Consequently, she feels diminished not as a learner but a person*: "I think both writing style and personality walk together,., it is impossible to change one without affecting the other "* (Narrative E, p.105). Feelings of frustration and inadequacy of her self is therefore attributed to the characteristics of English as a language that limit the space of personal expression.

In contrast, Alice's story from the very beginning gushes in a variety of symbols English evokes in her imagination. To be more exact, the whole narrative is a description of how symbolic of English and the corresponding culture influences her personality. The polyphony of English sounds, words, forms, and tunes is added by the symbolic characters of the English people and places bulging from Alice's accounts of her adventures in the new world. It can be said that language learning for Alice is a deeply symbolic act---- she is forming the symbols of English spontaneously and *by doing so is learning* English. Further manipulating with the symbols she is visualizing, Alice lives in this new self-world quite freely enjoying both its virtual presence (through absence) and the new felt sense of a different self (through the obtaining of the Other, in her case a Betty Smith prototype). The more symbols Alice identifies and the more roles she takes up along the way, the more meaningful and enjoyable her journey in the Englishland appeared to be. By all accounts, the symbols emerged in Alice's mind deliver images defining an alternative reality she projects herself onto. It proves Blum's idea (cited in Meissner, & Van Damm, 1978), that "Homo sapiens is essentially a symbolic creature who has the capacity to create and manipulate symbols and whose existence, in fact, is defined by symbols" (p.321). Alice's contacts with the Englishness

are defined by the significance of symbols she retrieves form her English class. In Lacanian terms, the Symbolic order of the things created in Alice's mind brings to life the Imaginary order of the English world Alice so comfortably travels in. The deception accompanying creation of Imaginary order serves here as a means of reducing stress and anxiety the Real order inevitably possesses. As Alice mentioned, *"All unpleasant events were simply deleted from that self-constructed convenient reality. Positive emotions were the essence of it"* (Narrative A, p.125).

Alice lives in the world of words that created world of things (Lacan, 1977). Interestingly, the linguistic dimension of *the Imaginary* referring to the new language eventually finds it perfect sense and use for *the Real* in Alice's story: it actually reduced the usual trauma the learner experiences on seeing how the target language is different from her first one. Projecting an image of Betty Smith on her personality Alice firstly copies the imagined prototype which symbolizes for her an English girl, and secondly, gradually starts practicing the characteristic features of that girl in her real, non-imaginary, non-English life. Now it is interesting to summarize the story. It turns out that a Russian speaking girl has acquired some features or behavioural patterns borrowed from the image of an English speaking girl created in her imagination with the use of symbols of the new language. Markedly, the Symbolic of the language which represents the domain of culture influences the Imaginary of the mind which is the domain of nature (Lacan, 1977) which results in quite tangible in terms of behaviour impact on the Real. Asking herself if she feels experiences something like a split personality, Alice says, "*Any sign of a split personality? None of the kind! As I mentioned before, both dimensions harmonically blended in me making me feel quite complete, and – yes, thank God, - diverse! Now asking myself of how much of me remained in me after I had luck to encounter with the English language and all the accompanied realia it brought with itself--I am not ready to answer yet"(* Narrative A, p.128). Clearly, the imaginary

context transferred onto reality brings the fruitful outcome--- the learner not only achieves success but actually may develop the felt sense of different self. It is hard to define yet though if it goes about a dismantling of the fixed ego, or expansion of ego or something else, but the narratives prove one thing; the SLA do exert a transformative influence on the learner's sense of self.

This conclusion can be applied as well to the part of Alice's story where she describes her real adventures in the real Englishland , now in the form of the Canadian context. Next part will address this theme in a more detail.

Awareness of transformative influence on perception of the self

Both authors emphasize how deeply transformative the experiences related to language learning appear for them. Although Alice resumes how English has changed her self-world, this theme is particularly a predominant leitmotif in Esther's story. Learning and use of English result in a deep disturbance Esther's perception of herself is subjected to. In the very beginning of her journal she asks: *"How to modify my style of writing without transforming my personality?"*(Narrative E, p.105). By asking this question, Esther testifies her immediate awareness that her sense of self is "attacked" by the necessity to subsist differently than before in the conditions of another mode of expression. According to her perception, the problem is that she can not be different, or rather, she does not want to be different, but such resistance is incongruous to the task required. She feels that she must present herself in a totally new fashion, which she perceives as a too imperative push for her self to be transformed. As she says, *"I can hear the internal voices saying that the main problem is because I can't change my personality. I'm confused. I don't have confidence to write or even open my mind to learn a new language naturally*" (Narrative E, p.106). For Esther the requirement to

disturb her habitual sense of self in order to adjust to the new mode of expression is far too unnatural. She loses her confidence and seeks for ways to be herself and yet fit into the new context*:" My weapon to win that battle is not only to know what to say but to have confidence to do so. If I think optimistically, the English language may be a big chance for me to win the battle of confidence inside me. It is inside me where I find limitations, shame, and lack of confidence to express my ideas in a different language*"(Narrative E, p.108). Esther thinks that the key to overcome the problem in her new linguistic experience associated with the loss of her confidence is to become stronger: *"English is more than a new language to me. It is an opportunity to know different people, cultures, thoughts, feelings… to know a different Esther…going deeply inside of me…and open my eyes to see a new world"* (Narrative E, p.111). The idea of "opening the world" resonates with Alice's ideas about transformative role of English*:*

> *At first, it was more like a game, expanding and thrilling my imagination. Then, it turned into an almost existentialistic challenge providing me with a wide range of intense emotions which in the long run added so many dimensions to my personality. My encounters with English bestowed the philosophical questioning of measuring the things on me, and in the first place, measuring the measure of all – the essence of myself*" (Narrative A, p. 147). For Alice English learning creates an ongoing condition of restructuring her self- world. Esther sees English as an agent for the reassessment of her personality as she puts it. On one hand, she rejects the English language infringement on her right to be herself, on the other; she regards it as the chance to learn more of herself.

The process of learning how to exist in the Englishland for both authors evidently fluctuates between the desire to protect their habitual self by resisting the "destructive" external impulses and at the same time extend its virtual boundaries to feel less constrained and isolated from the new context. As Alice mentions, "*It feels as if the*

defensive function of my ego had been transformed into a more sophisticated plane of self- protectiveness, now in the form of an open-minded investigation rather than one-sided judgment and/or rejection. As a result, the meaning of my existence became more diverse and determined in its striving for understanding the world around me" (Narrative A, p.147). It would be a mistake though to conclude that the transformative direction of such process is progressively linear: from a point of almost zero tolerance towards acceptance of its developmental value (Esther), or from a point of almost complete acceptance in the beginning to its deeper understanding through numerous ups and downs(Alice). It seems that transformative influence takes place quite individually largely depending on numerous factors, including age of the learner, conditions of the initial encounter, motivation to study, length of stay in the linguistic setting and the quality of the setting itself. To specify, Esther started her studies when she was an adult with an established personality and set of values, while Alice made friends with English as a child who was only developing her sense of self. Esther needed English to pursue her academic degree, while Alice did not *need* English at all--- it came to her spontaneously as one of the subjects taught at school. Esther needed to master English fast; Alice had years ahead of her to learn it step by step. There is no wonder how differently both learners perceived the transformative processes. Moreover, the final conclusion Esther made in her journal regarding potential changes her personality undergoes is very controversial. In one of the final passages of her journal she wrote: *"Today I overcome challenges in my life in a different way than before. …English learning changed me. I think I am not so confident to do certain things tan before. ..but I believe I am stronger to do other things than before. I can confirm that English learning did not change me at all. I do not lose my values and beliefs. I just adapted myself to its new place"* (Narrative E, p.112). Despite it is not hard to understand what Esther meant by that statement, it still lacks clarity in the sense of to what extent the transformative

processes did touch her self: does it go about a mere mimetic, superficial adaptation, or about a more sophisticated sense of the extended open-mindedness together with the painfully resumed strength such an experience evolved? Alice is clearer about that highlighting that she did not become a superhero after her personal trials but she felt much empowered by the insights into the sense of herself using English: "*Looking inside myself taught me to embrace my own imperfections and delusions. Paradoxically, it contributed even more to the sense of my completeness. I still don't know exactly who I am but it does not bear any shade of inner insecurity ---the circle of my personal search has reached its spiral turn definitely on a much higher level* (Narrative A, p.148). It echoes in some point with Bhabha's (1994) speculation on the causative character of self- identification, "For identification, identity is never a priori, nor a finished product; it is only ever problematic process of access to an image of totality" (p.51). Asking the classical psychoanalytic question *What do I want?* leading to the immediate question *Who am I and why do I want that?* actually does not imply the complete achievement of the final product—*Now, knowing who I am I will know what I want,* because it can never be answered or perceived to the full. Rather, the point is to obtain the absent through the present, and reversely it "makes present something that is absent----and temporally deferred" (Bhabha, 1994, p.51). That creates the potential difference like in physics to produce the flow of energy to deal with the stressful experiences described by both authors of the narratives. Trying to identify the new feelings about their sense of self Alice and Esther are seeking the answers yet come to more ambiguities about who they are in the new context. However, both acknowledge how significantly this process adds to the more extended view of themselves and the others.

To all appearance, the learner's journey in the world of the new language resembles a gradual spiral ascending to higher levels of her acceptance of the new paradigm as a result of the inner struggle between the old, habitual, comfortable

patterns associated with L1 and new, unexpected, disturbing patterns of L2. Why the spiral? Because when the conscious or unconscious of the mind rejects the new pattern, the learner can go easily back to the starting point of the try to understand and finally acquire the rejected part, and only after some time of inquisitive attempts of the mind to search for the appropriate strategies of adaptation, the learner can go up again without a fall and start a new try to go higher. It is not proceeding in a linear progression because it is the interplay between conscious and unconscious of the mind that adds a binary spiral dimension to this process. The repeatedness of the situations along the way of accepting the new forms be it linguistic, cultural or social ones, does not let the individual fall back to a zero point because every new step is the result of the already acquired one. At this point, the cumulative temporality of the L2 learning falls most agreeably into the perspective on the learning process offered by the psychoanalytic tradition (Felman, 1987) which poses that learning "proceeds through breakthroughs, leaps, discontinuities, regressions, and deferred action". By this " the analytic learning process puts in question the traditional pedagogical belief in intellectual perfectibility, the progressist view of learning as simple one-way road from ignorance to knowledge" (p.76). The reason for such unconventional temporality is hidden in the depths of the mechanisms the human mind employs dealing with reality. The battle field of the learning process reflects the struggle of the opposite inner forces stirring up the development encouraged by the new. In particular, it refers to the language learning. When the conscious rejects new patterns and forms, the unconscious starts its eternal search for the ways of their acceptance following the ego's wish to feel satisfied and keep the balance to comfortably exist enabling an individual to move further. Simultaneously, when the conscious accepts something, the unconscious questions it and urges the mind to reconstruct it to move further along the spiral turn of endless personal development. Moreover, the acceptance or rejection as well as the search for

ways of adaptation can be initiated by either side of the mind, and they can easily

interchange their roles spontaneously to push the mind to go further. It seems as if the

dialectic conflict and unity of opposites which begins in the depths of the human mind,

would never leave us alone.

Contacts with host culture: Essentialization of otherness

Unhomely existence

A disturbance of direction in the 'beyond'

caught so well in French …au-dela,… fort-da..

----Bhabha (1994), p.1

The recognition of and interaction with the host culture described in the narratives

resonate well with the psychoanalytic views explaining the dialectic relationship

between Self and Other (Bhabha, 1994; Kristeva, 1991; Lacan, 1995). The key principle

of self-identification is investigation of the split difference between Self and Other. The

iterative referral to *the Other* as the entity bestowing a degree of objectivity, a realm of

missing features and at the same time the image denied by the Self for the sake of its

identification, is one of the critical themes of the psychoanalytic tradition. Symbolically,

the Other can not exist other than in the mind of the Self. It is the imaginary discursive

space between Self and Other which develops the symbolic consciousness of

differences between the two and by applying such the Self accomplishes its eternal

task—to identify its "individuality, autonomy and solitariness" Bhabha (1994) .

Transferring this paradigm to SLA, we can imagine that the learner constructs her sense

of self deriving it from L1 and the corresponding culture. Consciously or unconsciously it

is preserved in the stand-by mode of the mind until L2 emerges on horizon. The most essentialized sense of individuality as the informant of L1 and its ethnicity appears when the domain of L2 , or *the symbolic Other*, represents its own autonomous nature in the learner's mind. Not surprisingly, many second language learners say that they started appreciating their culture and beauty of their language only or especially after they encountered with the other languages. The visible communication with the representatives of the target culture is normally doubled on the virtual psychological plane in the form of interaction with the symbolic *Other* no matter how intangible such interaction can be. Similarly to how children interact with the symbolic of their L1, developing the sense of self, the SL learners have to consciously construct the correlative patterns between the felt sense of self created by L1 with the new domain, *the symbolic Other,* offered by L2.

The first stages of language learning resemble diving into the unknown water basin, a pond or a river when the diver sees and feels the texture and temperature of the water but can never predict how deep the water body can be. What is seen on the surface can help to make predictions, but it is the process of diving itself that can inform the diver about the real characteristics of the pond. It is the diver's entry into the water body extended in time and space that helps her to feel the essence of the experience. The deeper the pond, the more dramatic as well as meaningful can be the experience….

Entering into the symbolic essence of the host culture can be no less informative as well as dramatic. Quite differently assessing what emotions dominate in their lived experiences related to the use of English, Alice and Esther share though the same struggle against difficulties in the two domains: communicating with the hosts and writing in academic English. As discussed in the previous section, communication with the hosts is seen quite problematic as their behaviour apparently does not fit into the

patterns imagined by both learners. The conventions of the academic writing style make them feel awkward, verbose and repetitive. Both aspects of the language learning and use disturb Alice and Esther: they feel frustrated, unsatisfied and rejected not only as learners but as individuals whose communicative skills do not hit the target. Alice's and Esther's conversations with Canadians along with the unsuccessful writing of academic papers provoke a feeling of personal inferiority and Otherness. Apparently, both of them view Otherness as the main cause of their inferiority. Again in a reversed fashion they view themselves as *the Other* to the context where they function in and at the same time the context quite tangibly structures the image of *the Other* for them to function with. Alice describes it as follows: *…The harness of otherness fixes you tight. It will take months and years to get rid of the initial despair, and most probably, to kiss not two but dozens of frogs before you bring yourself back to the normal state of mind. Or being a frog yourself until you start understanding them better*. (Narrative A, p.138). Esther's perception of Canadian culture even more denies any similarities between the two: her home culture and the one she has to live in. For her L1 is the essence of her Portugueseness and her personality, while English is treated as a language of the alien culture she can not adopt. She is very pessimistic about that; her journal is abundant with the words *sad, depressed, ghosts, tired, crying, fear, panic,* etc. She feels beside herself, and this new condition is very disturbing: "*My ideas are not organized because my feelings and thoughts are confused. It is not easy to understand and to use a different format to express my ideas after twenty nine years writing in a different way*" (Narrative E, p.105). Although Esther does not say anything about it directly, her reflections imply how awfully *Other* she felt. First of all, she feels her current role as being the O*ther* to the hosts and she sees how her Canadian teachers, relatives, classmates act as *the Other* to her. Articulated by both narrators these ideas bring us back to the psychoanalytic concepts of 1) abjection, and 2) the differentiating force of

the Other in the process of Self-identification. The theme of abjection appears in Esher's narrative as the predominant emotion and cumulative characteristic of her relations with the host culture. In the most general meaning abjection defines the state of being cast off. When Kristeva (1982) describes an abject it is somebody or something who exists in between the concept of an object and the concept of the subject, something alive yet not. The liminal state of mind of the learners who encounter an urge to correlate their sense of self with the L2 context, being at the same time products of L1, fall into this category most accurately. A disturbance of their direction in the search of themselves is provoked by the controversial desire to let something go they would still like to keep.

To illustrate, when mastering the phonetic system of the new language almost all learners strive for reducing and even "deleting" their L1 accent. I was asking myself why the reduction of the accent is so important for SL learners? Why even an off-hand comment made by the native speaker regarding her accent is perceived as some defective feature diminishing the perception of her L2 command? I think that at this point both psychoanalytical paradigms mentioned before paradoxically coincide. On one hand, the desire to get rid of the accent is caused by the desire to disavow of something that marginalizes the learner's sense of value of herself: the learner does not want to be seen as *the Other.* On the other hand, the perfect pronunciation is seen as the missing feature of the Self striving for perfection. Moreover, mimicking herself to *the Other* who possesses the perfect pronunciation, the learner satisfies her "desire for the Other" as a stimulus for achieving the missing totality of her self-image. Many times Alice indicates that her linguistic experiences, even most dramatic ones, in the long run result in the satisfactory feeling of being more complete.

Torn between the desire to keep her Self and yet longing for the equal representation among the host culture, the learner turns into an abject occupying some liminal place somewhere beyond--- beyond the barriers circumscribing her first culture

from the target one in some ambivalent and antagonistic virtual space that "simultaneously marks possibility and impossibility of identity, presence through absence" (Bhabha, 1994, p.50), a state of being neither here nor there, au-dela, fort-da….Un-home-ly existence…

Development of defence: Strategies of personal adjustment

The fragile textuality of the sense self could hardly withstand the external disturbances if not for its inner ability to adjust to the stresses brought by the new language and reality they occur in. According to Anna Freud (1946), one of the major ego functions is to observe the changes coming from the sphere of instinctual impulses and to create a mechanism of defence in case of any significant disturbance : "its purpose is to put the instincts permanently out of action by means of appropriate defensive measures, designed to secure its boundaries" (p.8). This explains the desire of the individual to protect herself from the internal and external disturbances by looking for the mechanism of defence. Transferring this idea to the SLA makes it evident that the learner is challenged enormously by the unusual form of the L2, pattern of its use and the setting it is used in, and these challenges largely disturb the id/ego balance. The ego developed on the basis of L1 is apparently disturbed by the complaints and frustrations of the internal impulses from the id, which signals about unsatisfied desire of the learner---the desire to fit into the new context, but it is temporarily deferred. As a result, ego is urged to activate its defence on the one hand, and find ways to correlate to L2 domains on the other. This process seemingly involves two opposite ego functions: restriction of the external invasion which is actually identifying even clearer the boundaries between the Self and the Other and extension of these boundaries, because otherwise there will be no adjustment. Most likely, the pulsating alternation of

these opposite modes results in the development of the SL acquisition. The range of fluctuation of the process, as well as its speed and quality depends on individuality of the learner.

Most probably, each learner experiences the urge to alternately extend or restrict the ego boundaries, or put simply, be open to the penetration of new language and its Symbolic domain, or reduce its influence in order to preserve the core of her essence. The periods of opening the getaway to match the new patterns must alter with the periods of keeping the energy and reorganizing inner strategic forces. Not to lose yourself means not to give up. If you completely copy the new ways—there will be no you anymore. If you resist all the time—you never acquire the new. As always the truth is somewhere in the middle. Ego defence takes place when it gets SOS from id. Most likely it happens when the learner experiences difficulties, or even failures while learning language. After getting a devastating comment from a teacher, like Alice for her first critical summary or after failing to participate in a class discussion like Esther, learners crawl back into their shell to think the ill event over seeking for ways out. The form of defence can vary across learners. The first stage usually involves blaming the others, the second- blaming oneself, and the third, most constructive— seeking the remedy. Presumably, the mechanism of defence is split into the assessment of 1) setting, 2) personal role in the situation, 3) options for getting out of the plight. Esther starts on a desperate note, identifying the setting as hostile and harsh. She can not find connections with Canadian environment and thus her first causative attribution of the difficulties falls into blaming the place and people around. Secondly, she asks what is wrong with her---- does she need to reset her goal? She finds faults with her inability to adapt and overcome anxiety and confusion. Thirdly, she turns to religion and essentialized images of Brazil to feel better imagining she is still there: "*When you make associations you can learn how to accept something better. I think this can help my*

adaptation process here in Canada. When I associate certain moments, places, people, with what I already had in Brazil , I immediately accept them" (Narrative E, p.109).

Moreover, these two aspects: attendance of the church and visualisation of Brazil coalesce into one strategy. In order to obtain feelings of security and freedom of her mind, Esther goes to the Winnipeg church and talks to Pastor Dan telling him a story of her hurt soul. This event when he carefully listens to Esther and gives her wise advice makes her feel better, and she understands that a challenge like the one she is living through can bring fruits for the soul. While attending Red River Exposition, quite unexpectedly, the images of Brazil came across her mind, a new wave of warm feeling lifts up Esther's spirit, and she feels stronger, as if supported by the energy of her home land. The period of incarceration and regrouping is over---a new energy born by the efforts of ego to adapt to the unwanted conditions warmed by the feeling of love to God and her home country literally charges Esther from inside. She feels more confident no matter what. She is ready to move ahead.

Similarly, Alice's period of failures and consequently depressive influences on the "respected sense of self" as she puts it, also urges her to question 1) the place and the people, 2) her command of English, and 3) what to do with all that taken together? Given that the described experiences of both authors are quite different in many aspects, they are markedly identical in how Alice and Esther search for the strategies of adjustment. It does not mean though that the strategies are identical. Alice also can not hide the annoying feeling the otherness of the hosts invoke in her. The otherness not only in the psychoanalytical sense but in the physical plane as well: the way the hosts converse, relate to things, treat newcomers---- everything seems to be taken from the opposite side of "the looking glass" reality. When the primary reaction in the form of annoyance fed itself up, Alice starts blaming herself thinking that it is probably her not them who is a frog to be kissed. She tries to put herself into the shoes of hosts and that

feeling of personal inferiority breaks out dominating the period of her incarceration. Yet she keeps on trying to grasp the reason behind communicative failures, both in oral conversations and writing. She tries to be objective; to raise herself over the situation unexpectedly dethroning her previous triumphant experiences with English, immaculate in their bliss. She tries to concentrate on the thought that English, as before can still be a source of pleasure in life. Somewhere at the back of her mind she knows—the period of isolation will be soon over. She will find the way out. She certainly will.

She analyzes all possible reasons for failure in writing and discovers that some denial of the L1 is not disastrous at all. She can function in both modes quite successfully if she yields to demands of the English writing conventions with patience and sense of measure, focusing on the desire to be understood rather than to stick to her *Russian -speaking* self by any means. This discovery turns English into the best friend again. Paradoxically, the abjection of the Russian-speaking paradigms forced by this situation even incites more love towards Russian. The power of positive feelings ends the period of contraction--- the extension phase of the ego boundaries is on its way…

To summarize, the authors of the narratives are amply emotionally touched by the lived experiences related to the English learning and use. The intensity of the emotional involvement reaches its highs for both of them despite the character of the energetic charge it conveys: the range of emotions can fall between complete despair to utmost excitement moving forwards and backwards along the scale. It agrees with the nature of emotions accompanying language learning expressed in the literature (Arnold, 2002; Valdes, 1986). In addition, on the surface the images of Alice and Esther emerged from the narratives fall into representative categories of cultural marginality described in the theory of intercultural communication (Bennett, 1998) mentioned before. With that Alice

can be regarded as a constructive marginal, while Esther as an encapsulated marginal. As Bennett, explains:

> The encapsulated marginal is a person who is buffeted by conflicting cultural loyalties and unable to construct a unified identity. In contrast, by maintaining control of choice and the construction of boundaries, a person may become a "constructive" marginal. A constructive marginal is a person who can construct context intentionally and consciously for the purpose of creating his or her identity. (p.113)

I used the phrase "on the surface", because I agree with the general characteristics of the descriptions of both groups, however I would not draw a strict borderline between them. When learners incorporate worldviews of the two cultures, it is almost a rule that they have difficulty controlling shifts between them, feeling vulnerable to a sense of alienation and experiencing pangs of normlessness and self-estrangement. Bennett uses all these qualities to describe encapsulated marginal only. In contrast, constructive marginal is described as the one who forms "clear boundaries in the face of multiple cultural perspectives. It is not so much a case of becoming individualistic as it is of becoming self-reflective" (1998, p.118). I can not fully agree with this, as the current study suggests that such categories work as stages of one similar process both Alice and Esther go through: the periods of encapsulated state of mind alternate with the periods of extension or constructive participation in the adaptation to a new condition of their life. I agree with Bennett though in the following: "Ultimately, it requires the person to make a commitment to a value system honed from many contexts" (p.119). It is my belief that to realize herself in the context predetermined by the second language and culture, the learner has to experience several stages, where encapsulation is only one of them. It echoes more with the studies proposing various models of psychosocial-

identity development for different cultural groups (Cross, 1978; Smith, 1991; Poston, 1990).

From a perspective of the post—structural philosophy, the described narratives resound the views expressed by Heidegger (1971), that every experience of the being is ultimately concomitant to its relation to the nature of language. As well as the nature of language bears the thoroughgoing points of reference to the experiences of the being. As Heidegger stated, "To undergo an experience means that we endure it, suffer it, receive it as it strikes us and submit to it….To undergo an experience with language, then means to let ourselves be properly concerned by the claim of language by entering into and submitting to it" (p.57). Alice and Esther got deeply affected by the very essence of their experiences with English. Their sense of selves obviously underwent transformative disturbances disclosed in their stories. Using Heidegger's words, it can be said that the "innermost nexus of [their] existence" has been intensely touched as they "who speak language may thereupon become transformed by such experiences" (p.57).

Chapter VI

Summary and implications

The cryptic nature of human psyche has always had much in store for research. To interpret multidimensional representations of the factors influencing the processes transpiring in human mind is extremely fascinating as well as extremely complex. Max van Manen's phrase *writing in the dark* comes instantly to my mind when I am looking back at the *Findings and Interpretations* chapter of this paper. I do not mean though that I am completely *in the dark* about what I am speculating on --- it is by no means a randomly undertaken discussion; however the themes emerged can ever exist as enigmas of the "dark side of the Moon" which the realm of human conscious and unconscious and interplay of the two will always be.

In modern times it is hard to imagine purely monocultural and/or monolinguistic societies. More attention is paid to discussions of the laws of cohabitation in multicultural worlds. So far it has been much said about how we should live in the conditions of cultural diversity which is gradually becoming a norm of our time. To judge if it is a positive or a negative phenomenon is quite problematic. Personally, I think there is no point in trying to establish that. I know that this process *is* happening. Global nomads of the nearest future perhaps will manifest more clarity in the issues related to living in two cultures from a child. Maybe for them there will be no question at all--- how many egos they have or how their multiple identities develop. Yet the contemporary generations of people who strive to come to terms with cultural diversity *within their mind* are only trying to understand: who are they living in two worlds? Are they same as before or there is something else in their nature growing almost imperceptibly that modifies usual behaviors and perceptions? Importantly, if the world is changing at a fast

speed so should our knowledge about how to match the necessities of the newest age. To answer the question how to live in the world of cultural diversity it is necessary first of all to explore how cultural diversity develops inside us.

To summarize, the participants of the present research went through the events of their lives connected with the development of cultural duality inside their *Selves* stimulated by language learning. To describe better how self is influenced by cross-linguistic and cross-cultural interplay they had to ask themselves questions they never did before. Some interviewees confessed frankly to me about that. At the same time all of them confirmed that it was very important to talk these events through because they learned much about themselves "actively carrying the frame of reference of two and more cultures" (Bennett, 1998). The effort to bring the interference of psychoanalytic paradigms to the evidence collected, offered a depth exploration of the target topic insistently called for. The recognition of evident interconnection between notions of psycholinguistics and theories of SLA made it possible to add the application of some classical and post-modern principles of psychoanalysis to the phenomenon explored. As soon as SLA refers to education, teaching and learning, it seemed quite natural to introject the elements of psychoanalysis to language acquisition. The role of unconscious in education is originally defined by Anna Freud (1936), who said that demand of psychoanalysis and demands of education go hand in hand. The wishes and emotions of individual can clash with the educational tasks and methods. Not infrequently educational tasks aim at the exact opposite what the learner instinctively strives for (A. Freud, 1936; Britzman, 1998). Such discrepancy of the wishes is obviously the subject matter of psychoanalysis. Not surprisingly, a number of scholars hold that "The question of teaching itself is a psychoanalytic question" (Britzman, 1998; Felman, 1994, p.75) and "psychoanalysis is a pedagogical experience" (p.76). With that in mind, I tried to view the target processes transpiring in learners with the eyes of a

sensitive observer and reflective participant. Paraphrasing Britzman (1998) I tried to keep from making figures of consciousness in the form of the teacher, the learner, the researcher, the participant, and the text block the figures of unconsciousness, such as tonality, mood, and modality from my attention.

The primary research question referring to the transformative influence of the second language on the learner's sense of self split into a number of related questions was addressed to the participants describing their English learning experiences. The themes emerged in the interviews and narratives suggest that:

1) Second language acquisition usually invokes certain transformative processes in the learner's perception of self, the accompanying characteristics of which, such as intensity, speed, quality, etc., largely depend on the learner's individuality.

2) Although the patterns of psychological response to the influence of L2 and the corresponding culture may vary, some general directions can be distinguished what resonates with the paradigm proposed by the theories of intercultural communication (Bennett, 1998; MacPherson, 2005).

3) Similarly to the process of L1 acquisition, the learner's encounters with the world associated with L2 may give rise to personal unease, conflict and rejection which in psychoanalytic teachings are described as *anxiety* (Klein, 1975), ego *conflict* (Freud, 1962) and *abjection* (Kristeva, 1981). The experience is much aggravated by the fact that the development of L2 is set up against pressure of the dominant primary structures: the learner's mother tongue and her culture associated with L2. If the acquisition of L1 represents the development of the first affective system of communication between the infant and caregiver, when the infant is dependent on and

therefore largely submissive to the latter, the L2 acquisition takes place in another circumstance for the learner, where both dependence on and submissiveness to the figures of the host culture context are of much less authority. Most commonly, the learner does not presuppose the long-term dependence on them, if any at all rather longing to achieve her complete utmost independence from them than seeking for the opposite. It can be assumed that it is much dependence on the host culture observed in reality in terms of the learner's linguistic inferiority roots the conditions described above as anxiety, conflict and abjection.

4) The period of the "symbol formation" related to the host culture and the new language can take quite a prolonged time span. It happens when the learner's mind apparently experiences the state of being neither here nor there, what adds to the feeling of surfing across the borderlines of either cultural domain basically being "nowhere" or *abjected*. Most often it is associated with the repressive feeling of losing oneself or strongly afflicted confidence described by the study participants. In such circumstances when the learner drifts along the boundaries of two cultures using the target language, her conscious and unconscious process the ingoing information to filter it and develop the mechanism of defence, or self- adjustment. It echoes with the corresponding concept from the psychoanalytic theory known as *ego defence* (Freud, 1962; A. Freud, 1946) when the subject strives for elimination of the suppressive affect. The defence involves a complicated process of resisting the suppression coming from the afflicting agent combined with finding strategies to cope with it in order to preserve self-image.

5) Mechanism of defence most likely is aimed at preserving the core components of self developed by L1 and its culture and at the same time structuring the components allowing the learner to adapt to the demands of L2 and its environment. The Other tongue's presence in the learner's mind can be threatening the sense of solid self. As

MacPherson (2005) suggests, "If the threat is significant, the students may resist the new culture and language and lose the opportunities it affords; if they succeed, they may lose their sense of being embedded within a particular community, history and place" (p.53). The binary nature of the task most likely transpires in alternating of the two modes of ego functioning: its boundaries' extension and contraction (See Figure 1, Appendix 5). During periods of extension the learner is actively constructing the symbols of the new language and culture, helping her to connect to the desired context and feel adequate, while during contraction or introspection the learner's self hit by inevitable challenges and even failures accumulates energy looking for the ways to adapt. Both modes provide the learner with the tactic and strategic options of turning failures into successes. The view of language as *Symbolic Action* proposed by Burke (1989) finds its almost exact reflection in the paradigm suggested above: as symbol-using creatures humans employ language not "as an opaque object through which events are perceived" but as a primary action itself, because "how we talk, think, and conceive is a distinctive part of human action. It affects what we experience and what we do to others in communication" (p.8). The idea that a linguistic action involves constant assessments and interpretations of and reflections upon situations and people with whom the person interacts crosses "the Husserlian insight that meanings are structures which a person lives before he thinks about them" (Howard, 1982, p.xii). Hermeneutical in its essence, this insight adds to the deeper understanding of how participants of the study sculptured their reality referring to the host culture and modelled their behavioural space in it basing on the referential and behavioural matrix proposed by L1. That is why not infrequently their interpretations of the new reality seem quite altered as if reflected in the distorting mirror with a two/cultural lens. The observed incongruities that different cultural paradigms maintain obviously provoke the

distortions in the causative interpretations of the living circumstance made by some participants of the study (Xiaoran Li, Esther, Alice).

6) There is no direct evidence that L2 learning accounts for the actual development of the second ego corresponding to the target context, nor there is any evidence saying that it does not do so at all. 5 participants of 6 talked about their awareness of the difference in how they view themselves speaking L1 and speaking L2. One participant does not notice any changes she might feel about her sense of self during L2 use.

7) There is evidence that the ego or sense of mostly conscious component of the inner self referring to L1 is somewhat *abjected*, or even refused in the encounter with most difficult tasks performed in L2. Some participants mention that in order to perform the task of the kind, they feel a necessity to transform their original personality expressed through L1 (Esther) or literally forget the conventions of their L1 to function successfully in L2 domain (Alice).

8) To penetrate into the world of another language the learners consciously and unconsciously are compelled to endeavour an entry into the Symbolic of the target language similarly to how they did it at the stage of the first language acquisition and ego development. The mirror stage of language development or the construction of the Imaginary based on the symbols (Lacan, 1977) of the second language helps the learner to transfer the constructed reality to the Real domain of the target context. Creating the world of words in their minds learners create the world of things of the new context. As indicated by Mayer (2002),

> In [many] fields we are being educated to observe a previously unprecedented
>
> degree of connectedness among things: between an observer and observed,

(hence between mind and what mind calls reality), between those who act and

whatever is acted upon (hence the relational nature of reality), and even between

our conventional view of the mind as *interpreter* of reality and as literal *creator* of

reality. All this amounts to a vastly more connected picture of the universe and

our place in it than has customarily informed a Western worldview. (p.94)

This point echoes with Norton's (2005) concept of investment which explains the higher

chances of learner's success in language acquisition and adaptation to the host culture

in case of learner's conscious efforts put into this process. According to this concept,

the more learner knows about herself and her goals, the more successful she can be in

obtaining the positive result. The self-world of the learner can connect better to the

world outside her if there is an active effort of *finding* such a space in her mind.

Acceptation of the L2 symbols helps the learner to construct the new realty initially in

her mind bridging it persistently to the real environment. The learner, who actively

creates this new world in her mind, has more chances to put it working for realization of

her needs. The key words for success here are *looking for and finding connection.* As

the study suggests, the process of self-identification for the learner involves occupation

of "bilateral space of the symbolic consciousness… [which] massively privileges

resemblance, constructs analogical relation between the signifier and signified that

ignores question of form, and creates a vertical dimension within the sign" (Bhabha,

1998, p.48). This can be seen as a process of conscious self- identification in the world

of new reality the learner is driven to make when she absorbs the new signs, draw

parallels and analogies with what has been already established in her sense of

identification prior to the encounter with L2 reality. To conclude, operating with Bhabha's

(1998) terms, the *dimension of depth* born as a result of this inner process serves as a

template, a matrix for the learner's ego to shape another "measure of "me", another

inwardness and profundity of my person" that was described by the participants of the study as some different sense of self they felt while using English.

9) Awareness of the more complex interactions with the informants of the target language than it is presented in the textbooks or other educational materials showcasing the native speakers of the learned language, can keep learners from falling into essentialization of the image of the Other. Moreover, such awareness can keep the learner from feeling the Other herself, attaching even more negative connotations to the image of herself as an unwanted newcomer who will be most likely marginalized by the hosts.

10) Application of the psychoanalytic paradigms to SLA makes it clear that the agency of mother tongue in learner's mind is similar to the symbolic figure of *Mother*, whose omnipotent influence on the child could be not only crucially developmental but quite suppressive as well. The strong referential relationship between mother tongue and mother has been described by Amati-Mahler, Argentieri, & Canestri (1993). They base such an insight on the earlier work by Greenson (1954) who "emphasizes how closely the origins of language are linked to the first sensory experiences within the dimension of the primary relationship with the mother "(Amati-Mahler, Argentieri & Canetsrip, 1993, p.67). Following these insights, the present study makes it possible to assume that the suppressive nature of mother tongue as Symbolic Mother for the learner might reveal itself in the power of the plentiful concepts and patterns which are strongly fossilized in learner's mind. The intensity of such strength can be so high that appearance of L2 as some agency or subject other than Mother can evoke a variety of quite dramatic mental, emotional and behavioural responses. Among those, comparing and contrasting L2 with L1 is most obvious when like the child the learner may be more inclined to find faults

with anybody or anything else in the world rather than with her mother. That may explain the initial either conscious or unconscious resistance many learners experience on encountering referential routes suggested by L2. Notably, the earlier the age of the learner is --- the less alienation the linguistic and cultural domain of L2 invokes in her. Presumably, it happens because the development of the L1 ego is only in process at a younger age and the influences of L2 are perceived by the child as a natural part of the development of the sense of self rather than some invasion or infringement on what has been already evolved.

11) The study also indicates that there is a significant difference between the way the foreign/ second language influences learners in the EFL and ESL context: while EFL seems to be perceived mostly as a life-enhancing and even entertaining activity which supplies the learner with a new lingual-cultural lens, the ESL setting is viewed most often as a demanding, challenging and English command as basically a survival skill. When language becomes the condition of a vital necessity, it urges the learner to reconsider her motivation, method, and goal as well as to reassess efficiency of the learning process.

Put simply, the learner has to constantly evaluate how well her target language command does the job. Such a massive and usually fast-happening shift on the learner's future-planning agenda can not but result in the disturbed sense of self, stressed to the point of imperative search for the mechanism of self-balancing. As representations of two large process-categories, roughly distinguished as the worlds of *happening* and of *acting* in hermeneutic philosophy (Howard, 1982)*,* L1 may be viewed as corresponding to *happening*, while L2 ----*acting*. That is why, even if we can formally find manifestations of both in mother tongue's and second language world-referential capacities, a deeper look will reveal how naturally L1 is *happening* and how forcefully L2

is *being acted* by the learner. Assumingly, the more efforts the learner puts into *symbolic action* (Burke, 1989) the more natural the *happening* of the L2 might eventually come about. Not surprisingly, studying English in the EFL context Alice initially had not experienced any pressure, frustration and disbelief, however when she, like Esther was situated in the ESL context, these emotions over flooded her calling for the conflict release. By all accounts, the dialectic unity of form and content finds its actualization in SLA when the learner has firstly *act* purposefully to accumulate the form, or the symbols of new language (sounds, vocabulary, grammar) which in time is to transform into the *happening of* L2 in the form of speech. This process can not but dramatically influence the learner's sense of self. Similarly to how acquisition of the mother tongue activates capacity of the child to develop her subjectivity, reflected in ego development, the acquisition of second language can not but perform remarkable shifts in the sense of learner's subjectivity previously formed by the mother tongue. The dynamic relationship of the two reminds me of what is described in quantum theory as *superposition and entanglement* mentioned by MacPherson (2005) in her article *Researching Liminal English. Superposition*, as the state of being in two places at a time, and *entanglement* involving the superposition of two and more particles, are the concepts reflecting the image coming to my mind when I think about the dimension that L1 and L2 interactive relationship most likely creates in learner. What is more, this mode of some entangled state transforms the initial state of the learner's mind to such an extent that the outcome of superposition can not be completely erased afterwards. As Schrodinger (cited in MacPherson , 2005) explains,

> When two systems, of which we know the states by their respective representation, enter into a temporary physical interaction due to known forces between them and when after a time of mutual influence the systems separate again, then they can no longer be described as before.(p.44)

This insight combined with the aforementioned speculative divergences borrowed from psychoanalytic and SLA theories regarding learner's identity suggests that the transformative nature of language learning can materialize in the sense of the *entangled* self rather than in the perception of two separate egos. It is proved by the numerous obscure yet expressive references of the study participants when they tried to talk of the presence of some different person in them while using English, but when asked to explain more of that they experienced much difficulty. Usually it happens when they touch upon the theme of enclosed sense of the *entangled self*---the zone of too *difficult knowledge* (MacPherson, 2005).

Implications for educational practice: From a window to a mirror.

Being completely aware of the fact that the topic suggested is more theoretical than practical and it could hardly be transferred directly to an EAL classroom, I still attach much significance to its investigation. The processes within the learner's self on encountering the new linguistic or sociocultural environment as well as her development of sense of belonging to it is a matter of utmost importance. To help means to understand. The more insights we as educators invest into an understanding of such complicated issues the more capacity to appreciate learner's emotional responses to language instruction we can get. Assumingly, the awareness of the phenomena the learner deals with will provide educators with a feeling of a deeper connection to the world of the learner, largely influenced by her culture and the symbolic of her first language. Will the culture of the second language become same close, precious, important? Or will such an encounter bring only bitterness of the lost expectations? A feeling of rejection and, subsequently, resistance? This study seeks to understand the

learner in order to help her. Put simply, by helping others I will help myself to help others….

As to broader social relevance of the study, hopefully an experience of an insight into the nature of the target phenomena from learners' perspective will contribute to a more credible research procedure. Presumably, it will encourage educators and researchers to be more sensitive to learner's responses to challenges of a new sociolinguistic environment. Rather than simply supposing that any ESL instruction is positive and empowering a priori or ignoring the obvious difficulties students may experience, educators might be more willing to assess how their teaching philosophy embraces the diversity of such responses. As Valdes (1986) highlights, "It is the responsibility of foreign and second language teachers to recognize the trauma their students experience and to assist in bringing them through it to the point that culture becomes an aid to language learning rather than a hindrance "(p.viii). Concurrently, I would not be willing to concentrate primarily on dissenting learners' perceptions of the target culture or negative experiences of their language learning. My intent will be to explore the learners' perspectives on the target issues in their full diversity. Moreover, I encourage them to analyze their perceptions and present their views on how to address issues of concern. In doing so, on one hand, I will advocate the legitimacy of learners' representation in the *focus on learner* research; on the other I will promote the recognition of the equal value of such a representation among teachers, scholars and program coordinators.

To summarize, it is assumed that the current study will allow educators, learners and researchers

1) to gain a better qualitative understanding of the learners' perception of self using English described by learners themselves;

2) to extract a more distinguished view of the *language ego* role in identity transformative processes;

3) to connect the research findings with the EAL classroom practice /student counselling/teacher-training programs; to encourage staff's awareness of the multiple patterns of cultural adaptation;

4) to more often apply the "*insider"* approach by learners' involvement in the study;

In addition, an *"insider"* approach to the study could generate the objectives increasing its overall credibility a) to avoid misinterpretation of the data related to very personal, hardly measurable phenomena as in much of psycholinguistic research; b) to prevent imposing on learners researcher's personal bias and comprehension of the processes under study; c) to offer an alternative research paradigm where the focus on learners is shifted from an "*educator- researcher -focused –on- learner"* mode to "*learner-researcher- focused - on- learner* " mode. To conclude, above and beyond feeding my own interest in the topic discussed, I sincerely tried to exemplify an approach where a focus on learner was specified mostly by the learner. Optimistically, such a perspective will make a highly valued resource for research practice.

The plenitude of the points outlined does not presuppose receiving the answers to all the questions put in the study. As Britzman (1999) mentioned, "Learning and teaching, it turns out, are epic in their force, pressure, twists, reversals and returns "(p.1) and that all education is" a psychic event… that involves something other than consciousness" (pp.3-4). From the very beginning I have been aware of the polyvalent character of the topic. The multiplicity of the issues emerging from the current study makes me feel that I am only in the beginning of a serious investigation into the nature of hidden processes in the learners' mind seen through the psychoanalytic perspective currently missing in the related field. In my opinion, a certain simplification of the views referring to how a learner actually acquires a foreign language, or how a newcomer accommodates in the

target environment, demands an insight more sensitive to the self-world of the learner who is a human being in the first turn and only then a learner or a newcomer. Understanding how the boundaries of the human mind open towards the influential possibilities of intercultural interaction, to some extent transforming the originally coded patterns of communication established by space, time and matter relevant to L1 is a topic with especially exciting potential (Mayer, 2002). Re-conceptualizing of some previously established paradigms employing the concept of participatory universe (Skolimowski, cited in Mayer, 2002) recognizing the importance of unity and equality of representation between the investigator and what is investigated may offer an approach where subjectivity will acquire a particularly crucial value. In terms of methodology, the final belief is that the credibility of research will be recognized by the preparedness of researcher to "personally" connect to the information received from the participant. Then the subjectivity of researcher and the subjectivity of participant will construct a dimension of another quality and temporality, derived from the depths of conscious and unconscious of both. It may be argued that such an internal dialogue between the two will work well to determine a more complete view of the "objective" reality as they will be offering the missing pieces of the puzzle from different times, spaces, and matters together. Therefore, the shift in research from a window to a mirror, when the researcher, reflecting and reflexing on the observations received from the participant will ultimately learn as much about herself as about the latter, will cultivate a more embracing view of what we call "objective" reality (MacPherson, 2005).

In conclusion, the present study implies a necessity for educators to be aware of the most common patterns the EAL learners manifest in responding to challenges described above. Knowledge of the complexities language learners have to face can promote appearance of programs more sensitive to cross-cultural differences. Educators should be aware of a wide range of emotions newcomers experience before

they feel comfortable in their new permanent or temporary home. Awareness does not mean some superficial acceptance of stereotypical generalities regarding images of cultures. Rather it calls for a deeper empathy based on genuine interest and understanding of how language learners struggle to adapt. More so, it creates connection with people who contribute to the plentiful diversity of the host country. Such a connection incorporates more real than declared inclusiveness helping arrivals to more effectively reach their academic or career goals and integrate into society. Educators should include strategies of assistance in case learners feel disconnected from the classroom context and/or new setting. What particular strategies ---can be a topic for the further research. Essentially, a psychoanalytic perspective in education will call the teacher for ability to tune her ear to the experiences of the learner more empathetically. In a reciprocal fashion, this practice will make the teacher more responsive to her own experiences as well as more alert to the choice of methods used in teaching. Again the intersubjective relations between the two may open new perspectives on how to interfere with the self-world of each other. Thus the subjectivity of the learner will serve as a bridge to connect to the subjectivity of the teacher. Hopefully, these dialogues will eventually encourage both sides "to what Freud called "working through" or learning" (Britzman, 1999, p.6). To specify, the strategy of a "disclosure" when Esther had been offered an opportunity to divulge her inner emotions struggling with the next academic assignment in the form of reflective journal could be one of the practical suggestions to educators in a similar situation. Both sides of the described conflict felt how a range of disturbing feelings was dispersing around : in the learner –of how hateful her experience was becoming from day to day as well as how desperate her efforts to improve it; in the teacher—how regretfully vain all *her* efforts to help the learner were turning to be. Quite obviously, the private talk was enormously cathartic for both the teacher and the learner. When the tensed situation called for the

urgent *combined* action, the open talk served as a way to realize that action. The key word here is *combined* as it reflects the essence of the dialogical penetration into the core of the clash. When the two had a chance to openly talk it over they found out that there was no conflict between them as individuals, that the conflict lied in the differently perceived approaches of how to solve it. When the teacher showed how she respected the learner's attempts to preserve her individuality in trying to adapt to the conventions of the academic style, the learner's negative emotions were remarkably remelt into a constructive energy necessary for the improvement so desperately sought. Thus, the talk and the offer to write a reflective journal may be suggested as one of the ways to put the distorted teacher/student relationship on a more positive track. Another strategy can be not to mark the assignment the learner is particularly struggling with in order to unblock the strained ability of the student to cope with the task fed by the fear of a failing score. By doing so the teacher will redirect the student's focus shifting it from the too anxious concentration on the quality of the task performance to the actual ability to *perform* the task, the quality of which can be adjusted later. Therefore, redefining the new platform of action for the learner, the teacher is actively defining her role in by and large cooperative educational experience.

Overall, the exploration of the human life-world through the personal stories that create this world engages numerous aspects of personal condition (Mimica, 2007; Shields, 2000). Language learning represents one of these conditions influencing the self-world of the person quite transformatively. The use of L2 in its natural setting adds even more drama to the experiences of the learner: the direct influence of the host culture creates more extremes than before. As dynamics of extremes (Britzman, 1999), L2 impacts the sense of felt self of the learner pushing her to create the reality derived from what and who she encounters. The sooner the learner can overcome the ego

conflict on encountering the alternative modes of existence inside herself the more successful the process of adaptation can be.

Speaking of methodology, psychoanalytical perspective is viewed as one of the most promising frameworks assisting educators in discovering the laws of intercultural communication stimulated by language learning. Categories operated in psychoanalysis, such as ego, self, "the Lacanian Other . pertain to the ground[s] of human psychic being " (Mimica, 2007, p.14). After all, in most general terms, the analysis of who wants what, and why and what can be done for the realization of the want ---is the fundamental endeavour of the human mind ever striving for perfection….

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Footnotes

1   Names are taken from personal contacts; changed to keep confidentiality.

2   I will use "Alice" for referring to the main character of my narrative while
    interpreting it.

3   To avoid any hierarchal allusions to whose narrative comes first or second, I will
    use E (Esther) and A (Alice) to refer to the narratives.

Conceptual clarification

Ego

- A concept from psychoanalytical theory of identity introduced by Freud (1923);

- The prevalent idea is that though it is ascribed to the conscious part of the "self", it partially includes the unconscious experience as well (Freud, 1923; Jung, 1913);

- Different thinkers have their own versions of ego; however these ideas are similar

- The concepts of *symbolic, imaginary, real* offered by Lacan (1968) and supported by Kristeva (1989) seem most significant in the proposed research as they assign a primary importance to language in the formation of ego as the felt self

- The felt self or ego accounts for developing a sense of self- identification within certain environment including various individual responses, such as acceptance, rejection, belonging, etc.
The latter particularly affects the identity dynamics in individuals.

Language

- Psychoanalytic and SLA theories attach a determinative role to language in the development of of human self- identification (Gumperz, 1982; Joseph, 2004; Klein, 1948; Kristeva, 1989; Lacan, 1968; Norton, 1995, 2005; Norton & Toohey, 2002);

- Language as core component of culture embodies *the symbolic* of culture (Fishman, 1999; Kramsch, 1993; MacPherson, 1995, 2005);

- The feeling of self or ego is formed through the entry into *symbolic* of language (Lacan, 1968; Kristeva 1989, 1991).

- Initially this process takes place in the first language development;

- It is the intent of the proposed study to explore a pattern of the similar (or dissimilar) process in SLA: whether second language learning affects ego development.

Identity in SLA

- "The individual sense of self and ways of understanding personal

  relation to the world" (Weedon, 1997).

- " a social group membership" (Giles & Johnson, 1981;

  Pavlenko, 2001; Tajfel, 1974).

- " [a reference] to how people understand their relationship to the world,

  how that relationship constructed across time and space, and how people

  understand their possibilities for the future"(Norton, 1997).

Characteristics of identity in language learning

- A complex, contradictory, and multifaceted notion
- Dynamic across time and place; fluid, always in the process of being

  formed
- Constructing language to the same extent as language constructs it
- Understood with the larger social processes
- Linked with the classroom practice; context depended and multiple

  (Norton, 1997; Weedon, 1987; Blackledge & Pavlenko, 2001).

Phenomenology

- Research approach based on reflective study of consciousness as experienced from the first point of view ((Husserl, 1920; Heidegger,1929)

- It emphasizes phenomena experienced precisely as they are lived (Kirova, 1923);

- High legitimacy is assigned to subjectivity (Kelly, 2002);

- It rests upon description and interpretation (van Manen, 2000)

- Of phenomenological concepts *hermeneutic phenomenology* (Gadamer, 1975; Merleau-Ponty, 1945) seems most appropriate for the proposed study;

- *Hermeneutic phenomenology* refers to the methods of drawing meaning from texts particularly focusing on the symbolic systems of language, art, culture as part of individual lived worlds (Grumet, 1988, Heidegger, 1973).

Interview questions:

1. I am going to ask you several questions related to your second language

   learning: How long have you been learning English?

2. What were your main experiences during language learning?

3. Describe your main success in language learning.

4. Describe your main challenge.

5. Have you ever experienced any inner resistance towards second language? If

   yes, can you describe that?

   (Clarification might go as: when you feel sort of challenged by the new language, is

   there something inside you that resist to learn and use a new language?)

6. Can you describe your personality?

7. How do you view yourself when using your first (second) language?

8. How do you view yourself using English?

9. Have you ever observed that when you speak another language you do

   something differently, say you start using some gestures you never did before, or

   you think differently?

10. Is there anything else you would like to speak of in relation to might

    experience during second language learning?

Thank you so much for your participation.
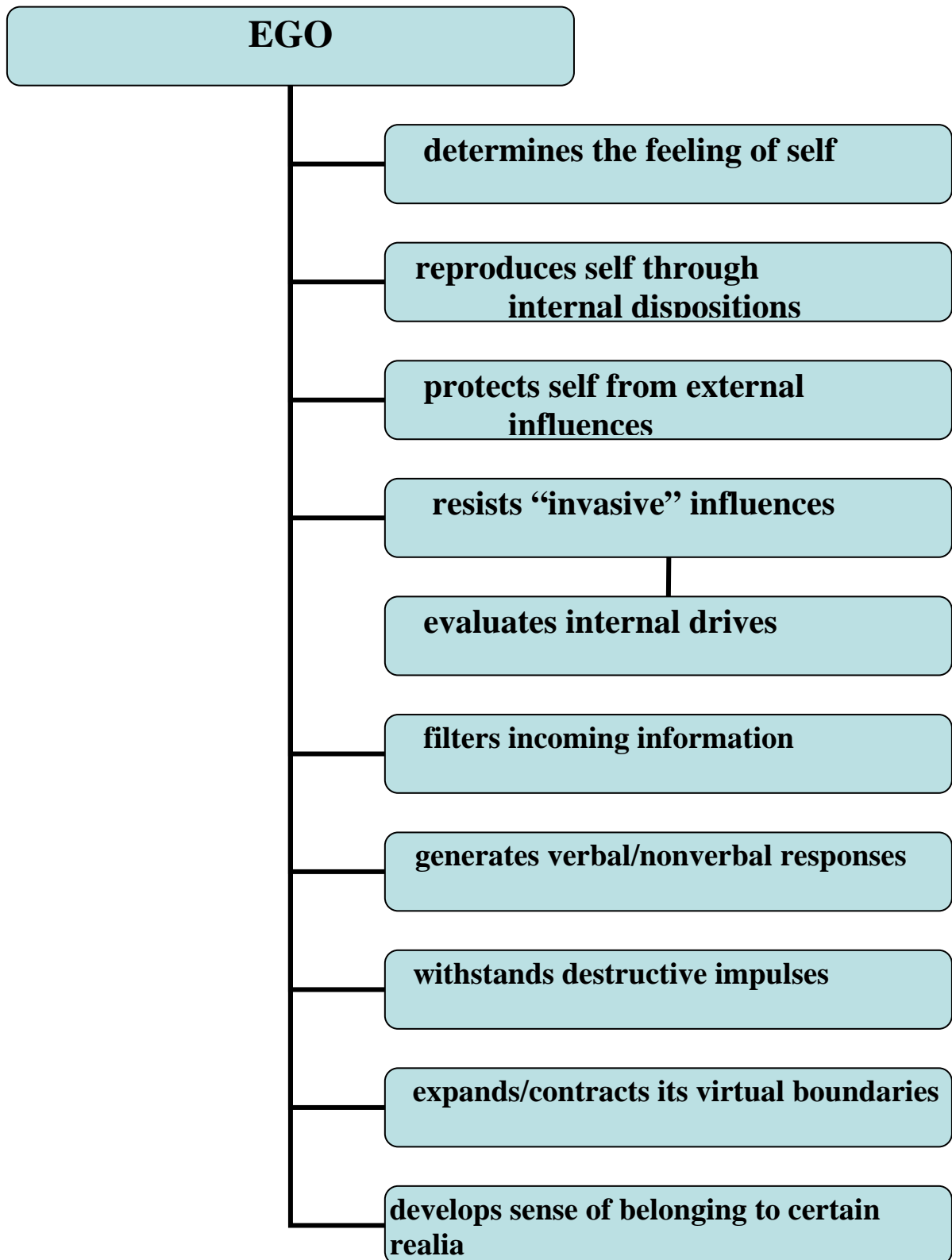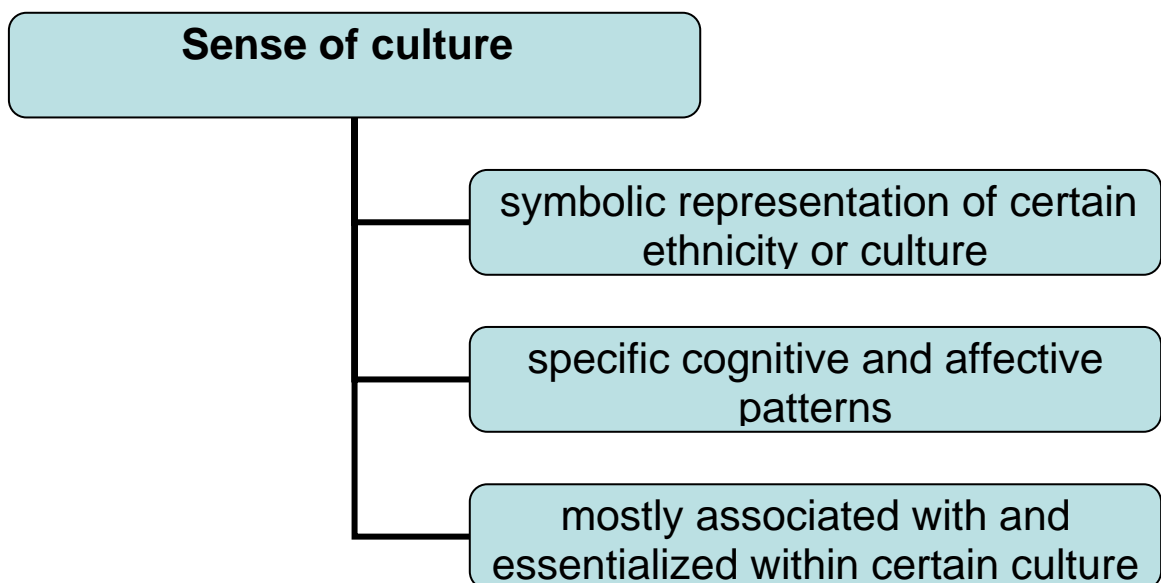
Table 1   Ego functions

EGO

- **determines the feeling of self**

- **reproduces self through internal dispositions**

- **protects self from external influences**

- **resists "invasive" influences**

- **evaluates internal drives**

- **filters incoming information**

- **generates verbal/nonverbal responses**

- **withstands destructive impulses**

- **expands/contracts its virtual boundaries**

- **develops sense of belonging to certain realia**

Table 2 Self-identification components   Appendix 4

Self-identification

- personality (sense of self)
- identity (sense of belonging)
- self- actualization (self-expression)

Sense of culture

- symbolic representation of certain ethnicity or culture
- specific cognitive and affective patterns
- mostly associated with and essentialized within certain culture

Social membership

- social situatedness
- group awareness
- social relationships
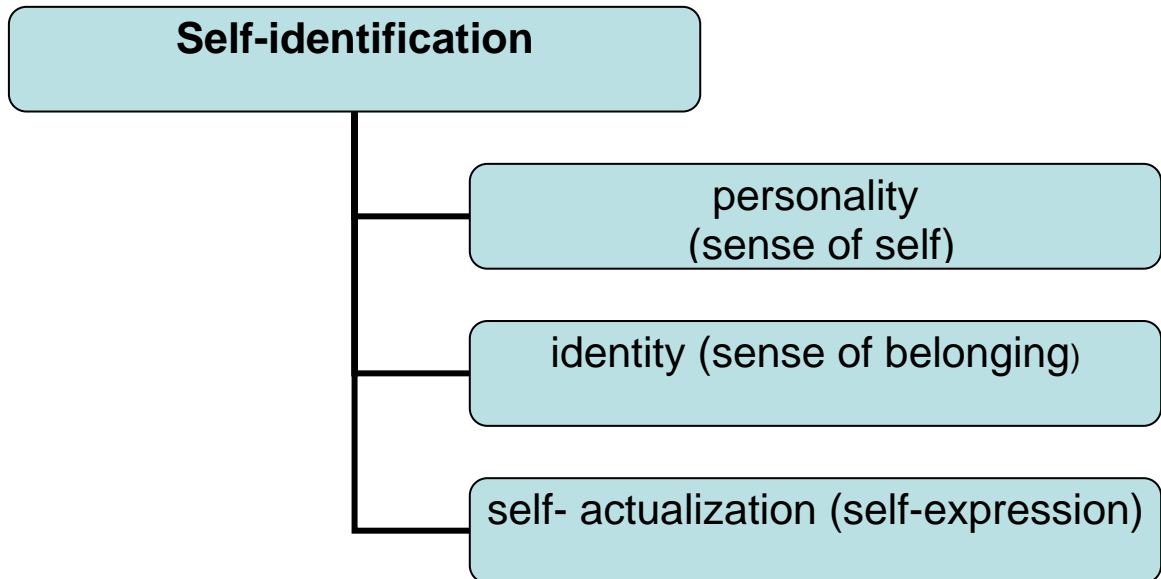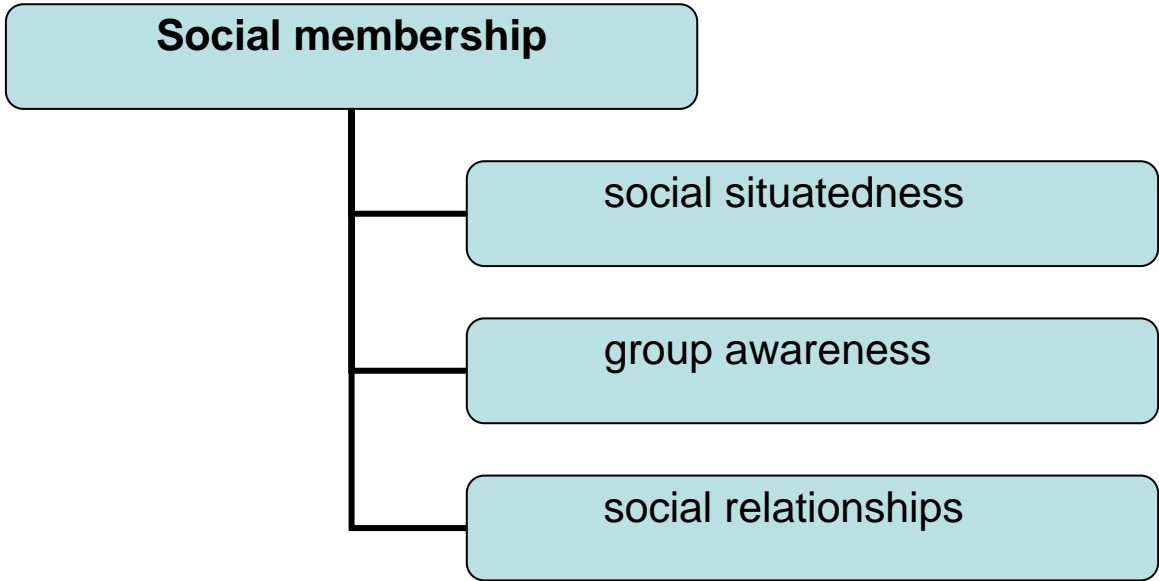
Figure   1

Ego boundaries expansion   and   contraction